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Trains Illustrated

IAN ALLAN

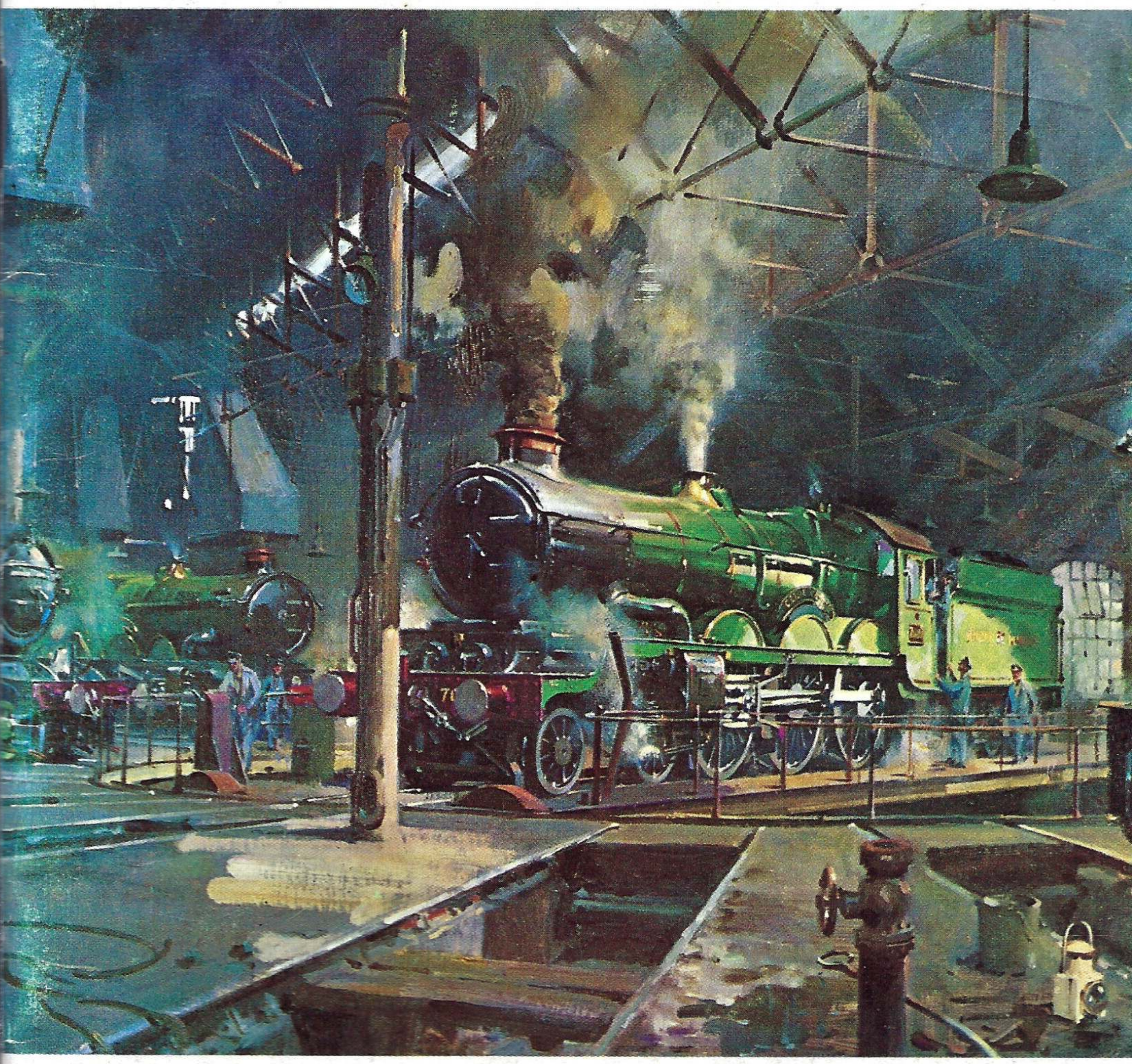
# Steam Alive!

No.12 in a series on railway preservation

**No.0012**

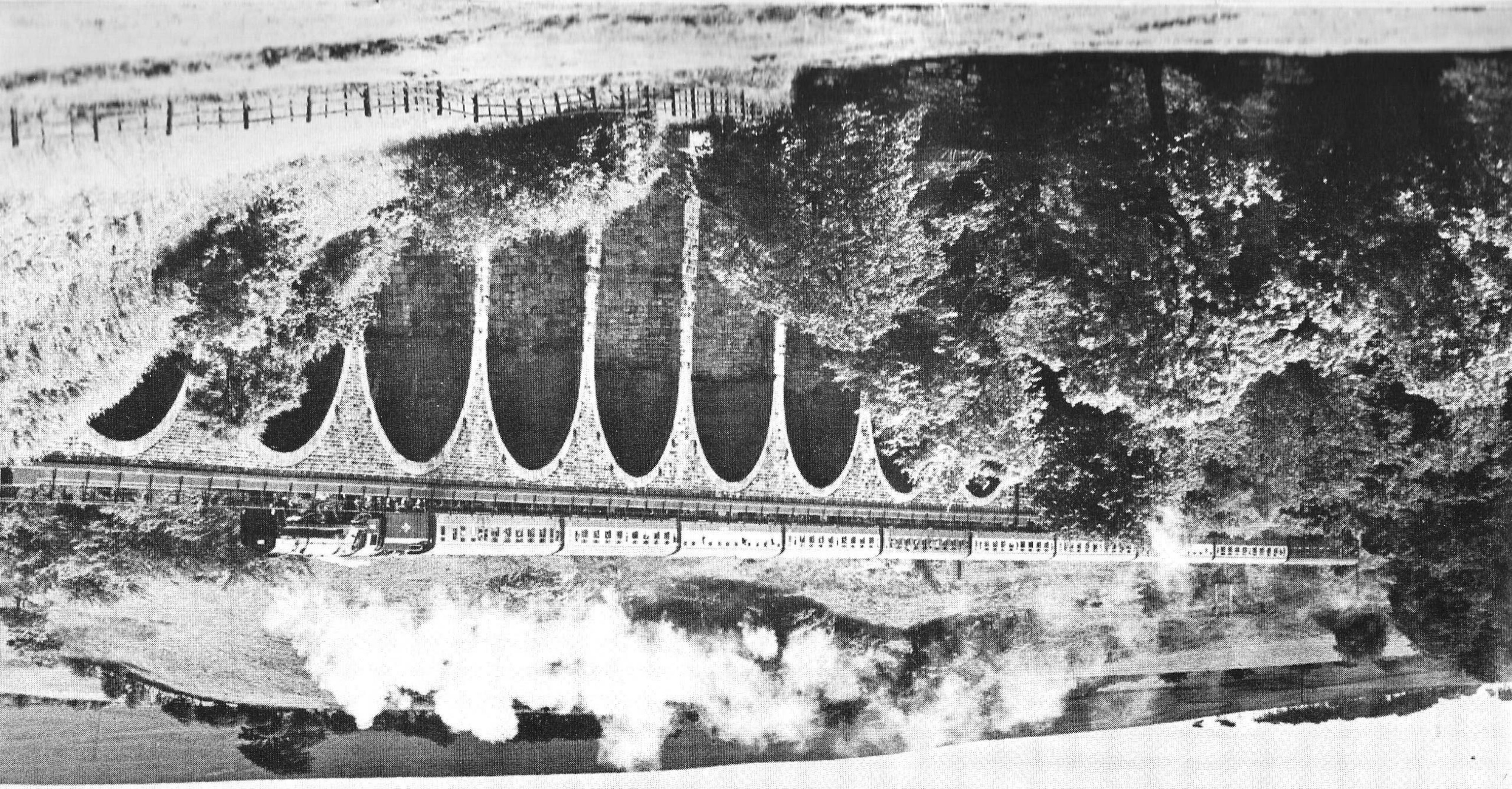
## A Look Back Over 21years

## Back to Steam on the Main Line?



**Colour Plates :** *Flying Scotsman, King George V Cookham Manor*

**Articles :** *Twenty One not out, British Railways and the Steam Engine, A Royal Occasion*



# Steam Alive !

## A Look Back Over 21years
## Back to Steam on the Main Line?

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Photo Feature


**Front Cover**

*"Castles at Tyseley" from the original oil painting by Terence Cuneo.*
*[Courtesy Colourviews Ltd.*

**Frontispiece**

*BRITISH RAILWAYS' LAST STEAM TRAIN: No 70013 Oliver Cromwell approaching Entwhistle with the "Farewell to Steam" special en route to Carlisle. [D. E. Goudthorp.*


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P. B. Whitehouse

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**Editorial**

THIS is the final issue of "Steam Alive" in its present form and the wheel has turned full circle. When the first magazine was published in early 1969 the "steam ban" on BR (with the exception of Alan Pegler's *Flying Scotsman*) had been operating for twelve months and the situation looked gloomy: we looked back on what had happened during the preceding two years with some nostalgia and hoped for the best. Now, in October 1971 there has been a break in the clouds with the "experimental" running of *King George V* from Hereford to Tyseley and back via London and Swindon.

In this issue we publish three relevant articles, one by W. G. Reynolds, Executive Director Operations for BR explaining why steam running is not on, and one by Peter Prior, Managing Director of H. P. Bulmer Ltd, who have custody of *King George V,* explaining how he did it and replying to Mr Reynolds. This concludes the sparring match between these two which began on BBC TV earlier in the year. The third article, by John Snell, deals with the maintenance side and the strides which have been made in these vital matters at Tyseley. October was memorable for both Peter Prior and those at Tyseley – the former was able to run with the help of the latter, and the engine helped to bring some 18,000 people to Tyseley Open Day, and some thousands of pounds into BR's coffers.

But let the writing be on the wall – Bulmers were in a position to ensure that the "King" was in A1 condition, Tyseley was a safe base for the end of the journey. Unless these conditions can be met, no other engine is likely to run on BR tracks.

Finally let us take note of a great "coming of age". In October 1950 the first of all Railway Preservation organisations was formed in Birmingham: without this lead who knows how long it would have been before steam railway preservation got off the ground. The Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society comes of age in October 1971 – the article by Jim Lloyd celebrates this, but reminds us that it is people who count in the end. And so be it.

# TWENTY ONE NOT OUT

**J. M. Lloyd**

Being a commentary on Railway Preservation from the beginning . . .

PLAY was very slow. The hot sun and the sweet smell of newly cut grass made me so drowsy that I found it difficult to concentrate on the game. My eyelids slowly drooped. The two opening batsmen had decided on defensive play and were patting the ball back to the bowler with the regularity of a tired metronome. . . . My mind kept on wandering back to the request I had received that morning.

"Three thousand words" the editor had demanded, "three thousand words to record the coming of age of railway preservation," which seemed a lot of words to record something which is already so well chronicled. From the classic "Railway Adventure" by one of the founders of it all, through a host of books, pamphlets, magazine articles and newspaper reports the story has been well told.

Nearly every scheme, not all of them brought to fruition, has recorded its contribution somewhere or other and it would indeed be a mammoth task to collect and collate all this into one story, and certainly one of more than three thousand words. It would require the ability of a superman if it was to be even reasonably complete.

What, I wondered, had been the earliest venture into preservation? Had there been an earlier example of a bad commercial risk for the sake of sentiment and nostalgia than that of the Manchester City News? So much was this an almost copybook precept of what was to happen to the Talyllyn some thirteen years and a world war later that one might be excused for thinking that there was a connection, but, so far as I know, none of the founders of the Talyllyn movement knew of the City News, let alone took notice of its reprieve.

I drowsily opened my eyes. The lengthening shadows of the old elms along the boundary were nudging their way across the green sward, and a particularly indolent bee droned past. The scoreboard stood at a solitary 1 . . . and my mind drifted back to 1951 when the Talyllyn Society was one year old. I could see in my mind's eye the usual party of volunteers assembling at Altrincham station for a convoy departure at 7 pm. Some arrived by rail, some by 'bus, others on foot and the very few, the providers of transport, by car. The night was cold, dark and miserable. The street lights reflected across the wet forecourt as rucksacks, wellingtons, flasks, and spades and picks were stowed away. Geoffrey Naylor had managed to borrow the family "Minx" and there was keen competition for a seat in that superior vehicle for it was provided with a heater at a time when such gadgets were viewed with suspicion by most motorists. I was lucky, I remember, and doubly so when, approaching Bala in a storm which had steadily grown worse as we threaded our way across the Llandegla Moor, the convoy slithered to a halt. Tom Noble's "Rover" had hit a puddle of such depth that the water had been forced through the pedal slots and, literally up the trouser legs of those in the front seat. Excitement was not yet over, for whilst climbing up to Brithdir, up David Baxter's "little brown road" the "Minx" and a cloudburst chose to reach the same spot on the hillside at the same moment in time.

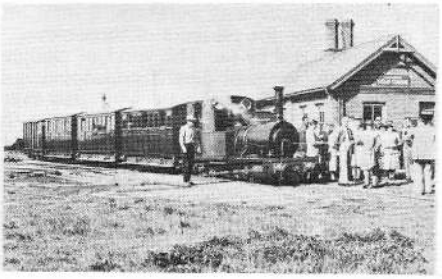
Just before midnight the outside light of the Dolgoch Hotel came into sight and the journey was over. At this time the house had its own generator fed from a small reservoir below the station and, usually, by midnight the demands of the generator had outstripped the resources of the reservoir. The lamps throughout the house had dimmed until they could but glow a deep cherry-red which changed its feeble intensity as lights were switched on or off.

What we did that weekend I could not recall, but working parties followed a set pattern, and many of us did not visit the Towyn end of the line from one Annual General Meeting to the next. With every working party went two precious pegs. Painted white and lettered "NWA" and the date they were hammered into the bank at the ends of the relaying accomplished. Relaying was, perhaps, too generous a term for it consisted of easing the turf along both sides of the rail (all fastenings between the rail and the sleepers had long since given up their hold), digging out the old ballast and rotten sleepers, raking and laying the turned rails on the best sleepers we could find. The permanent staff spiked down the rail during the following week. Only in the exceptional case could we justify using one of precious stock of spare rails to replace one with the web rusted through.

At dinner time we sat on the slate edging of Dolgoch platform and shared our "dubbin" sandwiches with red squirrels and an assortment of bird life which brought joy to the hearts of the ornithologists amongst us.

"Owzat?" shouted somebody, from very far away it seemed. "Bloomin' comedians!"

*Above:* A long time ago: A World War II picture of No. 1 Talyllyn at Dolgoch station, Talyllyn Railway. [W. A. Camwell.



*Right:* Re-Opening: The first Chairman of the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society, W. G. Trinder, cuts the tape at Wharf Station, Towyn to mark the first train to run under the new regime. This historic date was Whit Monday 1951. [P. B. Whitehouse.

muttered a caustic voice at my elbow breaking into my reverie. Comedians, I thought, we were comedians in a way I suppose. It was only our sense of humour and the ability to laugh at ourselves which kept us going when things were really tough. We used to amuse ourselves through those dark empty miles by producing explanations for the things we saw on our journey. There was the statue, with arm upraised, standing in the main street of Bala. This, we assured all newcomers, was erected to the memory of the one-time Inspector of the Bala Tramways. We thought he got a better job in the end at Rawtenstall for within living memory their 'buses displayed a notice showing just such a figure, very lifelike it seemed, which advised intending passengers: "If you wish to board the 'bus, Stand erect and signal thus . . .". Once somebody at the watering stop found a ticket lettered B.C.T. with a punch stage for Ferry, thus proving that there was a service to the lake. They must have employed an efficient advertising contractor (or Merseyside is really the capital of North Wales) for the ticket carried the advertisement of a Liverpool firm on the back. Even today the watering stop at Bala is known as the "Tram Shed" for that useful convenience stands outside a building which, with a door like that, could only be a tram depot.

For a long time there was a considerable length of new asphalt, about three-foot wide and on the "up" side of the road at Llanuwchllyn which our investigation showed to mark the site of an abortive experiment to provide water troughs for steam rollers and traction engines about to climb up to the Garneddwen summit. The scheme came to naught because of the fewness of vehicles fitted with water scoops. And all those little shelters between Bala and Druid – each in Talyllyn-style and complete with nameboard must have been the only completed works of the ill-fated Abergynolwyn, Llandegla and Altrincham Junction Railway. 27in gauge, of course!

We enjoyed ourselves in those early days. Had we then been able to see what lay ahead we might well have had second thoughts, but we soldiered on. We learnt the techniques of making a railway the hard way. We played our part in the Coronation of 1953 and we found ourselves in the special newsreel of that event. We co-operated with the Army and BBC TV to our advantage and we played host to professional and amateur film-makers from many parts of the world. We had only to cough and newspapers and radio demanded a story. "Local Man Runs His Own Railway in Wales" appeared in one form or another in local newspapers throughout the country.

We struggled to ballast the track when the permanent staff had spiked and levelled it and sometimes only managed one train from the Quarry to Tadpole Cutting in the week-end. We not only learnt the art of winning shale from a crumbling face but we also learnt the knack of re-railing wagons loaded with a ton of wet concrete-like ballast. One or two of "Cyril's short lengths" soon became standard equipment on every ballast train, and we were well drilled in using them. We were happy, we made others happy and it seemed that we would go on for ever preserving, as we liked to tell the visitors who came in ever increasing numbers, a little bit of yesterday for the pleasure of tomorrow.

But it was not to be. The wind of change was blowing. We had fired the imagination of nearly every Englishman who has ever longed to be an engine-driver in his youth and grown up to be (as all Englishmen do) a champion of lost causes. The expression "Englishmen" I use deliberately for there are few preservation societies outside England and Wales, and those in Wales are controlled from the other side of Wat's Dyke. So soon as the enthusiasts saw that steam was departing from the nationalised undertaking and that the good Doctor's blueprint for a viable system would result in the wholesale closure of branch lines, the number of proposals for preserving branch lines (and even a main line or two) and locomotives increased at a remarkable rate. The Talyllyn and the Festiniog, which was an obvious complementary scheme, were no longer the spiritual shrines to which all enthusiasts paid homage.

Soon it seemed that there had been an explosion in the ranks of the preservationists. Those whose residence did not permit their joining working parties to the Cambrian Coast began to look round and see what there was nearer home. To preserve a railway costs money as well as generous donations of free labour, and the Talyllyn was already discovering the hards truths of branch-line finance. To the cost of replacement permanent way materials had to be added the cost of additional and replacement rolling stock

We of the narrow gauge permitted ourselves a wry smile when preservation spread to the standard gauge. Knowing the difficulties of re-railing a small engine we shuddered at the thought of what would be involved with something weighing upwards of fifty tons. But those of the maximum gauge carried on and had a laugh at our expense for as the source of little engines, never numerous, dried up, the big stuff was increasingly available from British Railways and industrial users.

Slowly the faces of those around us changed. Some of those who had been with us from the start disappeared; perhaps they went to pastures new which were nearer home; perhaps to new ventures where their association with the Talyllyn could be used to their advantage; perhaps, simply, they just lost interest in railways and found interest in other forms of preservation which were springing up. Some found themselves with a girl friend who thought there were more important dirty things in life than dirty railway engines.

The old faces which remained grew older, the hair greyed and then thinned. New faces were young, earnest and pimply and their owners talked learnedly of valve motions and firing techniques, rarely of ballast and choked up ditches. The dress which the cold wet winters of the Fatthew Valley had caused us of necessity to adopt, a utilitarian garb of gum-boots, ex-army camouflaged waterproof and oil-skin sou'westers, was outshone by the brand new steaming hats and strings of badges sported by the second generation.

As the cult of railway preservation grew, its popularity as a public attraction grew. Interest increased year by year, only suffering a set-back when the summers were so atrociously bad that the visitors did not leave home, or so fantastically good that everybody (except the railway staff) spent the whole of their time on the beach.

The increase in traffic brought its own peculiar problems. There were those starry-eyed idealists amongst us who would have liked to preserve the whole atmosphere of the Talyllyn as it was in 1950; grass grown track, hedgerows wild with bramble and a profusion of sweet-smelling wild flowers in their season, sheep which wandered at will because the Talyllyn grass always seemed sweeter than that of their own field, and an elderly locomotive which whooshed its way through a hay field with a rippling rake of box-like coaches behind it. But it was impossible to hold back time. The pressure of

*Left:* Quarry Party: Volunteers from the North West Area working in the Talyllyn's private "quarry" between Dolgoch and Abergynolwyn. [John Adams.

*Above:* Volunteers at Pendre: Chopping wood for tomorrow's fire lighting. [Rimmer.

*Below:* Volunteers at Dolgoch: Vital repairs to the high arches of the viaduct. [John Adams.

*Above:* Volunteer Stationmaster: Trains cross at Brynglas during the busy season necessitating a member being on duty to ensure absolute safety. [P. B. Whitehouse.

*Right:* Volunteer Fireman: The late Rt. Hon. Earl of Northesk was both President and Chairman of the Society. He did a very great deal to lead the newly fledged organisation through the many pitfalls of the early days. [P. B. Whitehouse.

No 3

*Left:* Festiniog Manager: Allan Garraway, now the General Manager of the F.R. cut his teeth in the preservation world at Towyn. Here he is with Dolgoch at Dolgoch in 1953. [P. B. Whitehouse.

*Above:* Trains Passing at Brynglas: Volunteer guards and Station Master. [Rimmer.

*Below:* Extension: The Talyllyn's new adventure is the extension beyond Abergynolwyn to Bryn eglwys. Here is a party of volunteer workers clearing the trackbed. [David Mitchell.

popularity which follows publicity forced the pace and the anachronism of a mid-Victorian railway geared to suit the convenience of a different age was no longer feasible.

The Talyllyn became respectable and efficient. There were fewer occasions when main-line connections were missed, when intending passengers had to be turned away and fewer times when everybody at Towyn with a car was despatched hotfoot up the valley to rescue a train load of stranded passengers. We were still fooling ourselves that we were trying to preserve a railway so we discovered old coaches from defunct lines and wasted much of our time and resources restoring them to their former glory. We were still trying to run a railway which oozed the spirit of a more leisurely and genteel past and each year quite happily made a contribution from Society funds to cover the working deficit of the Company. The upstarts had no such inhibitions, for the most part they were concerned with running a railway and sometimes it seemed that to them passengers were a necessary hindrance to their activities.

Replacement equipment for the narrow gauge dried up and new coaches and even new locomotives became points of discussion. The only sop to the preservationist was that they should be in keeping with the spirit of the past. The large gauge boys combed the scrapyards of Barry and similar places for engines which appealed to them, too often paying too much attention to their own preferences and too little to their suitability for the work they were expected to perform. The pages of the railway press carried advertisements ad nauseum for contributions to save this or that while industry was quick to realize that for the cost of a small advertisement they would probably sell their life-expired works shunter for much more than its scrap value. Even British Railways found it advantageous to demand more for rolling stock sold to a society than for that sold to the scrap dealer.

Ever increasing traffic saw the decreasing importance of the general volunteer who was prepared to tackle anything from standing in as a guard to digging out the drains in the Dolgoch cutting. The second generation discovered how to monopolise the more attractive duties and managements discovered the problems attendant on using volunteer labour for essential jobs and started to employ staff to the limit to which their resources would allow.

A sort of financial Parkinson's Law developed in the early sixties when it sometimes seemed that the need for cash to spend exceeded the avowed intention to operate a railway. Every means of raising additional revenue was explored. Railway shops souvenir counters printed tea towels and refreshments were soon vying with the societies as to which would produce the most revenue for the railway undertaking to spend. The amassing of surplusses and the cult of percentage profitability became objectives in their own right with the old fashioned approach to retailing being gradually replaced by the latest theories of big business. With the advent of the third generation came the mumbo jumbo of the modern world. It often seemed ironic to the old brigade that their creed was that of huge undertakings, soulless and geared to an entirely different type of service. That they were applicable to a declining market seemed not to dispirit their proponents.

I stirred from my drowsing with a cold shiver. "What's the score now?" I asked my friend of the caustic tongue. "Twenty-one not out," he said "and", pointing to the opening batsman, "I think he's in for ever." It seemed that this was the point to leave. I pulled my jacket a little tighter and ambled off down the road. Twenty-one. Twenty-one years of change. Twenty-one years in which the original concept has so changed as to make it hard to reconcile the present with the aims and ambitions of that past age.

What lies ahead? It is certain that the future will present new problems demanding their own peculiar solutions but the nature of which we cannot, at this point in time, guess. Certainly the various railways are leaving their old image behind and acquiring one very much akin to that which uninformed members of the public knew before they deserted the railways for the roads. The belief of the visitor that he is travelling on a branch of Big Brother is easily understood when one realises in how many ways British Rail is being copied. The guard on a Talyllyn train is almost indistinguishable from a BR guard and even carries, on occasions, a BR type hand-lamp.

Perhaps in this age of contracting public transport when the rural 'bus is being vanquished by the private car just as railways fell before the onslaught of the motor 'bus, the preserved lines might come to find their services again in demand by the travelling public who are too old, too young or too poor to have their own transport. Already two railways have found a demand for a local service.

The questions cannot be posed, the answers lie in the future but I give thanks that I participated in the birth and unfolding of the movement, and I hope my successors will get as much pleasure from the next twenty-one years as I had from the last.

I kicked a newspaper lying in the gutter. It showed its name. It once had a companion, I thought, which was saved from extinction by the enthusiasm and volunteer efforts of a number of its readers, and on the strength of its success reverted to a normal commercial enterprise. Within months it was dead. For ever.

# British Railways and the Steam Engine

**W. O. Reynolds**
Executive Director (Systems and Operations), British Railways Board

*Mr Reynolds' article originally appeared in the June* 1971 *issue of "Transport Studies", the Journal of the Transport Studies Society; we are indebted to this organisation and to Mr G. S. Gilks for permission to reproduce it. It was the Editor's original intention that, as Messrs Reynolds and Prior had met face to face for a few short moments on BBC TV, to ask Mr Prior to reply in detail. (Our contemporary "The Railway Magazine" has answered Mr Reynolds' points in this manner - November* 1971). *However, since the article's publication Mr Prior has had his way and joined those of us who have had experience of running main line steam engines on BR tracks. It was thought better, therefore, that Mr Prior should make his comments in the light of his new experience, and this he has most kindly done. At the time of writing (November* 1971) *this trip by* King George V *is "Experimental", but there is little doubt that, as Mr Prior says, there is a limited money-making potential for both the BR and locomotive owning fraternity in general, if everyone is sensible. The danger could well be that neither side is willing to see very far beyond their own back yard, and that there are none so deaf as those who don't want to hear.*

DURING the last few years there has been criticism from time to time of British Railways' policy in refusing to allow steam locomotives to run on British Railway tracks. These locomotives are owned either by societies interested in Railways and locomotive preservation or by private individuals with an interest in steam locomotives. Understandably, some of these owners feel that as they have a locomotive in what they believe to be good working order, then they should be given the opportunity of running it on BR lines. Mostly their requests are associated with the running of a special train for railway enthusiasts which would go some way towards meeting the cost of maintaining the steam locomotive and might even yield a profit.

Requests to British Railways for this facility emphasize the opportunities that British Railways have for making money out of such excursions and also draw attention to the immense amount of good will that is generated by such occasions.

The refusal of British Railways to accept steam engines has thus been seen as a failure to accept a commercial opportunity and likewise a failure to improve their image by securing the good will of a large number of railway enthusiasts. British Railways have given much thought to this matter and justify their present standpoint on a number of grounds.

The first of these is that of impracticability. A steam engine does not simply run on its own, but requires many things in association. It requires coal, water, a turntable (so it may face the right way), a braking and heating system and a man to drive it. So long as British Railways had their own Steam locomotive fleet, these facilities were there. Now they no longer exist. The water troughs and the water columns have gone and water supplies are normally only available at terminal points for the diesel locomotives and railway carriages. So special arrangements must be made for water. The performance of a steam locomotive was in almost direct relationship to the type of coal provided and in the great days of the steam locomotive the coal was almost hand-picked. The types of coal required for high performance locomotives are either no longer available or can only be found at considerable cost. Without proper coal, the reliability of the steam engine performance must be a matter of some doubt. The locomotive turntables have been almost completely eliminated and relatively few facilities now exist to turn the locomotive. The diesel locomotive does not, of course, require to be turned.

As the request to run steam engines is almost invariably associated with the use of passenger coaches, it is pertinent to point out that the new standard passenger coaches, equipped with air brakes and electric heating cannot be hauled by a steam locomotive. Admittedly, at the present time older vehicles are still available but the numbers will diminish fairly rapidly.

A further problem concerns the availability of drivers and other railway staff with knowledge of steam engines. Obviously there are still many drivers in British Railways service who were experienced in the driving of steam

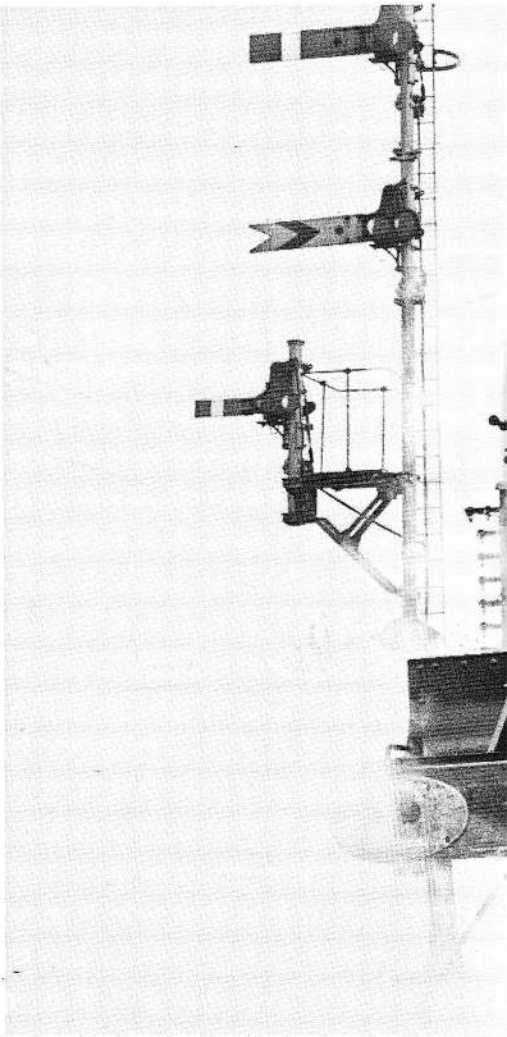
locomotives, but as each year goes by, the number diminishes and the skills of those remaining grow less. Moreover, it would be increasingly difficult to find men now with the requisite knowledge of both steam locomotives and the route that they had to drive over. Likewise, there is a diminishing number of maintenance staff with steam fitting experience and in this connection, one cannot overlook the contribution these grades made towards safety.

The safety element is obviously important and the inability to ensure that a locomotive was in proper condition could be quite critical. This is perhaps more important now than it was when steam locomotives were running, as the locomotives are now old, many parts are worn and the possibility of metal fatigue cannot be ruled out. Boilers have not been subject to the rigorous inspection by fully qualified boiler inspectors, and there could be dangers here. A comparison with the use of veteran and vintage cars on the roads is not valid, because of the opportunities presented on the road for taking avoiding action in the event of accident. The breakage of a connecting rod on a steam locomotive or the shedding of a tyre or a fracture of an axle could cause a derailment which might have serious consequences for a passenger train on an opposite or adjacent line. Not all steam locomotives have the braking characteristics of the present traction fleet so again there is a risk. The steam locomotives are not equipped with Automatic Warning System equipment, and so are not compatible with the signalling system on main routes.

The next point concerns the numbers and condition of the steam locomotives in private ownership. The majority for various reasons could not run without vast expenditure on reconditioning, and even the minority may be suspect in various ways. Accepting that there are a few – a very few – locomotives which could eventually pass BR standards, where does one draw the line? A general policy of fairness to all must be maintained, and for this reason British Railways have laid down that the sale of a steam locomotive conveys no right to run on British Railways' lines. This of course always leaves the way open for operation on privately owned railways, where British Railways safety standards do not apply, where there is no chance of interference with British Railways' train services, where a derailment would be most unlikely to react on other trains, and where no diversification of British Railways' management effort is involved.

It is possible to do most things – at a price – and the ability of the Americans to put a man on the moon does demonstrate this. There is little doubt that a small proportion of the steam locomotives that their present owners wish to run on British Railways could physically run and could probably run with a relatively high degree of safety, but much expense would be incurred in ensuring that these conditions were met, and British Railways would have to divert much management effort to see that they were met. This brings me back to my starting point. The intangible outlay on management effort must be set against the quite limited commercial benefits that could result from the odd speculative excursion. The very absence of so many facilities, the inability of steam locomotives with present day equipment, the need to ensure that standards of safety are near enough safeguarded all demand a high degree of management effort. It is the British Railways' view that this management effort is more properly directed towards their objectives as laid down by Parliament, i.e. to provide an efficient, commercially run transport system.

Finally, this view is not held by British Railways alone, and it is pertinent that one of the largest, most progressive and most viable of American Railways – the Southern Pacific – has had to impose similar restrictions.



# Past and Possible

**Photo Feature**

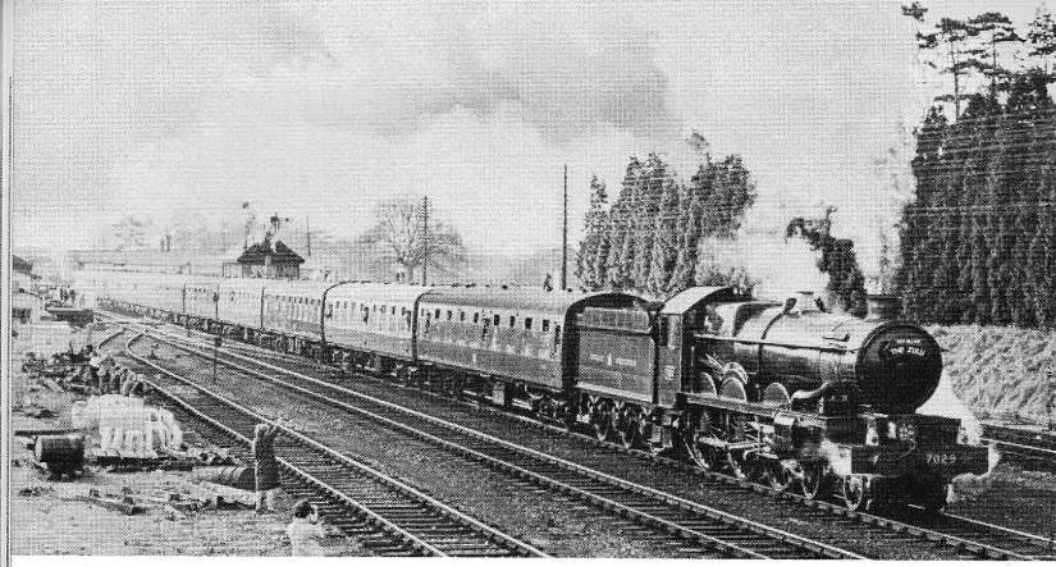
**Privately owned locomotives which have previously run on B.R.'s main line with profit and pleasure to their owners and British Railways, plus some which might well appear if sensible steam running could resume.**

The Ashchurch Lizzie: Still in B.R. livery Princess Elizabeth leaves for an Open Day at Bristol Bath Road Depot.
[Princess Elizabeth Society.

The Crewe Rebuild: No 4498 Sir Nigel Gresley tops Grayrigg Bank with the A4 Preservation Society special from Crewe to Carlisle on 1st April 1967. [Brian Stephenson.

*Below:* Drury's Engine: A4 Pacific No 60019 Bittern leaves Newcastle for Edinburgh on 4th November 1967. The end of private steam running and the beginning of "the ban". [John R. P. Hunt.

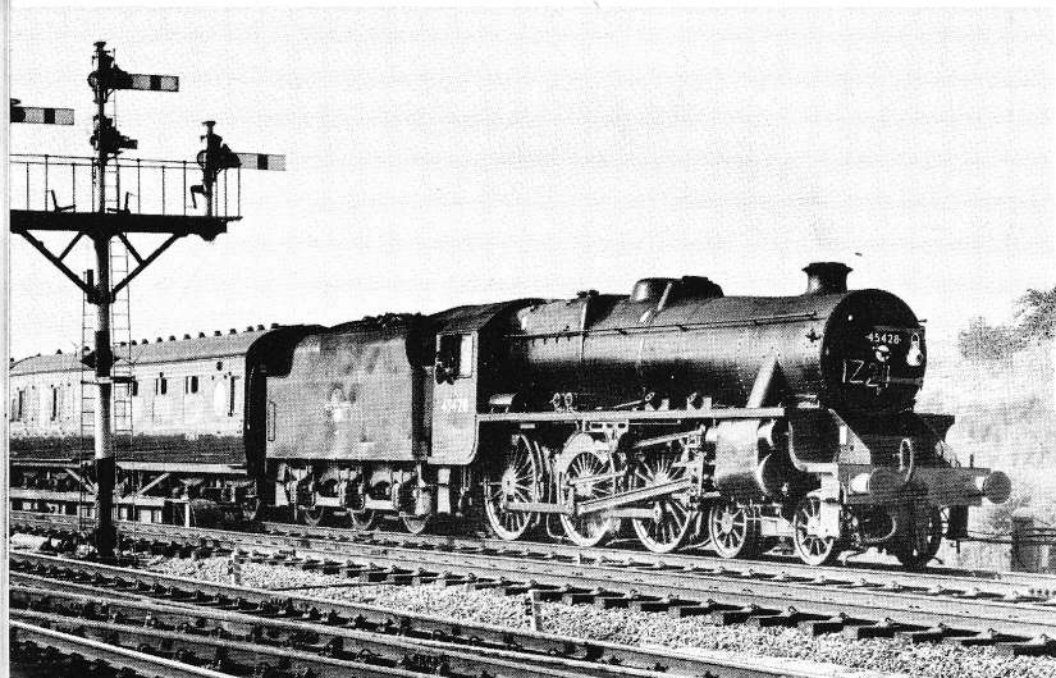
Dart Valley Engines: No 7827 Lydham Manor and 2–6–2 tank No 4555 (then in private preservation in Birmingham) take the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society special in to Barmouth Junction. September 1964. [M. Pope.



*Above:* The Zulu : Sunday 5th March 1967 saw the virtual closure of the GWR main line north of Birmingham to Wolverhampton and the end of the Paddington-Birmingham-Shrewsbury-Chester services. To mark the occasion Ian Allan Ltd., ran two special steam trains on Saturday 4th March. The trains were both Castle hauled. Here is 7029 Clun Castle passing Lapworth. [T. E. Williams.

*Right:* A picture from the past: Flying Scotsman at Edinburgh (Waverley) on 30th April 1968—the day of her non-stop run. [Derek Cross.

*Below:* The 7.14 a.m. most stations from Sheffield Midland to Leeds City was steam hauled. Tommy Greaves the Assistant Divisional Locomotive Engineer and lover of steam, lived at Normanton so the engine of this train always glistened in the morning sun. Here is No 45428 (now preserved at Tyseley) on this duty in 1967. [W. Leeson.



4472
LNER
ROYAL MAIL
4472

# A Royal Occasion

## Peter Prior

*There are few men who like to be beaten and Mr Peter Prior, Managing Director of H. P. Bulmer Ltd is certainly not one of them. Having taken* King George V *on loan and restored it to working order it was unlikely that he would rest seeing the engine trundling up and down his sidings. Those who love steam have been thrilled by his success, and the many thousands who turned out to see the immaculately groomed "King" were delighted beyond words. Bulmers (and Mr Prior) have made sure that they have top-line technicians to restore and maintain their engine, and this has no doubt been a very expensive hobby. It was the right and only way of tackling the situation and the benefits must have been mutual to the Company and British Railways. In* 1967 *when we finished running, things looked black, it was almost a case of Morituri te, salutant – now it is Dulce et decorum est . . . !*

MR REYNOLDS has raised some good points in his interesting article on the difficulties of running steam engines on British Railways. I have had some years of businesslike negotiation with the Railways Board and with Western Region upon the possible running of my engine, *King George V*, and on October 2nd I ran it on a 500-mile excursion lasting a week. Although some of Mr Reynolds' objections are valid, the majority are applicable only if assumptions are accepted which are not consistent with most sensible requests for steam operation.

Mr. Reynolds' objections are mainly technical, but before I discuss them I must say that I do not believe that they are the true reasons for British Railways' past reluctance to run steam hauled trains.

I think that the real reasons are these. In Britain the conversion from steam to diesel was fairly speedy, certainly very much faster than in any other European country, and some critics doubted whether this haste was financially justified. This factor made it all the more essential for British Railways to heavily emphasize their support for diesel traction, and conversely their rejection of steam.

The second reason is that although almost every railway employee is devoted, loyal and conscientious, there are a few who have had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into the twentieth century. The Railways Board felt that the reappearance of steam trains would encourage the "good old days" mentality which they are rightly trying to forget.

Thirdly, and most important, they felt that the technical difficulties inherent in running odd steam trains would consume a disproportionate amount of scarce management time. My recent expedition with *King George V* makes me understand this view.

One final reason perhaps is that big organisations, having once taken a line, find it difficult to retract from it, partly because of the sheer problems of persuading large numbers of executives and partly because it might involve them in a loss of corporate face. My recent *King George V* tour has demonstrated that the present management of British Railways is big enough to overcome this last objection.

The recent change of heart by the Railways Board may be because they have now given greater weight to the effect of lost support from potential friends. My research showed that two million people in Britain were interested in railways and most of them were aggrieved by the "no steam at any price" policy.

May I now comment on Mr Reynolds' objections in the order in which he mentions them.

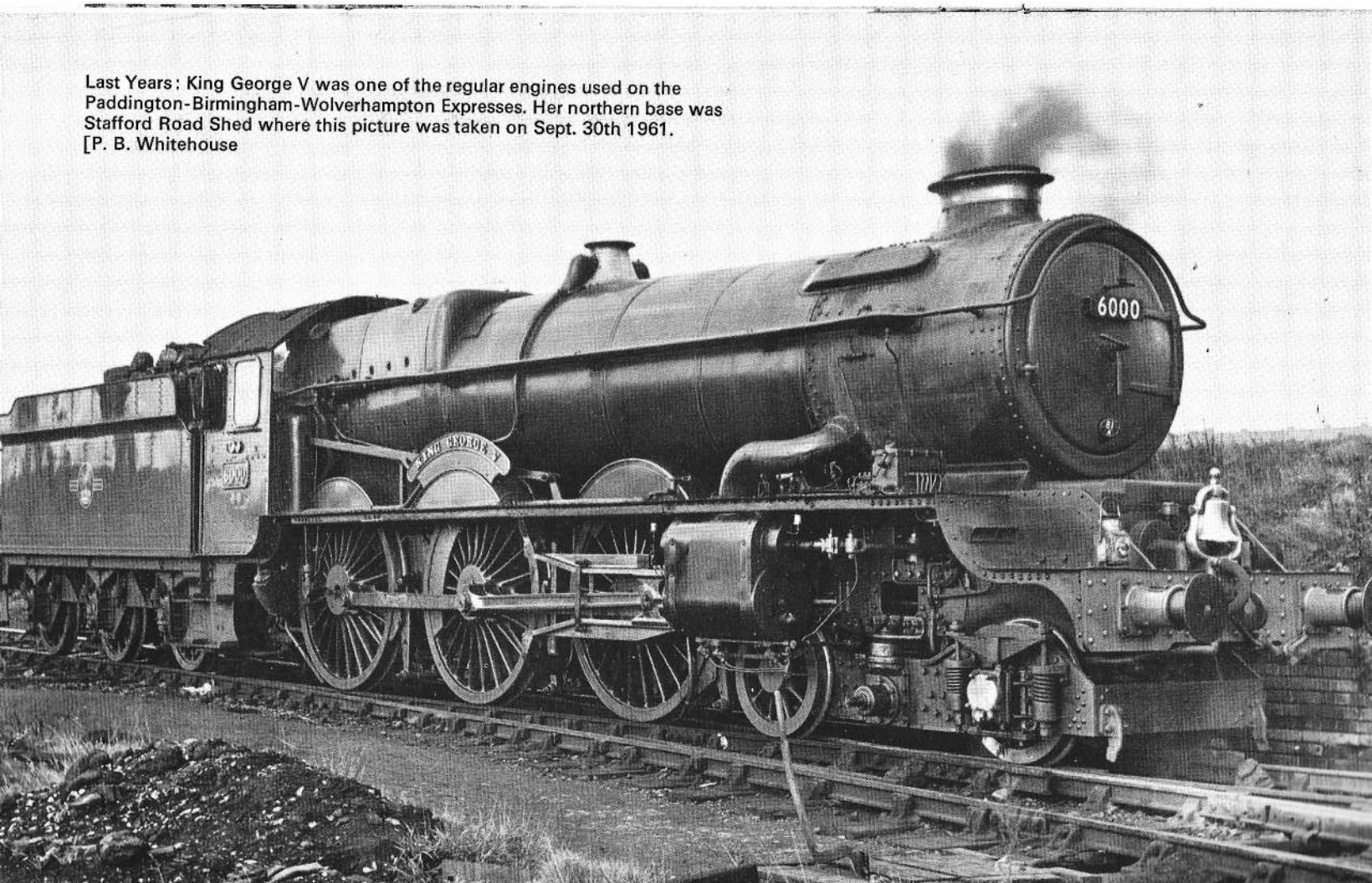
*Coal.* Quantity would certainly be a problem if would-be users of steam engines proposed journeys which consumed more than a tender load, but this is rarely the case. As regards quality, the National Coal Board tell me that Mr Reynolds' belief that the suitable quality is no longer readily available is quite wrong. Bulmers have certainly had no difficulty in obtaining supplies.

*Water.* This is certainly a valid problem but it is one which can easily be overcome for occasional steam journeys. If British Railways want to run *King George V* again we shall probably provide a second tender, thus increasing its range to nearly 300 miles, but on our recent tour we stopped the train in suitable loops and the Fire Service obligingly and cheaply filled up our tender with their hosepipes.

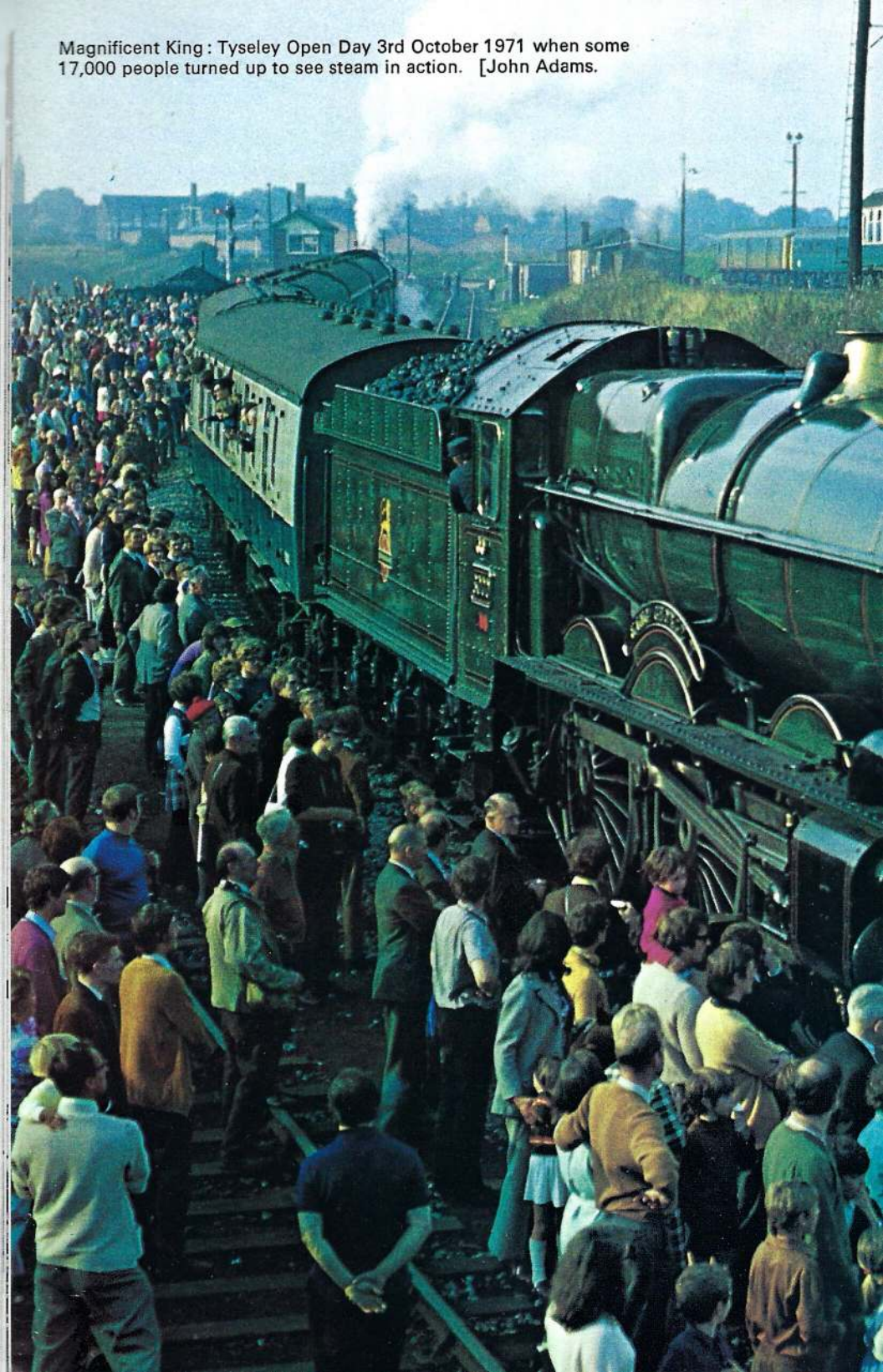
*Turntables.* Mr Reynolds' objection here would be generally valid if it were not possible to turn an engine by any other means. Each leg of our recent journey was planned to terminate either at a triangle or in the case of Tyseley where there is an existing operable turntable.

*Braking.* Certainly a compressor would need to be fitted to locomotives to accommodate the new style braking systems, but this objection is not at present relevant since there are still many carriages of the old type in use.

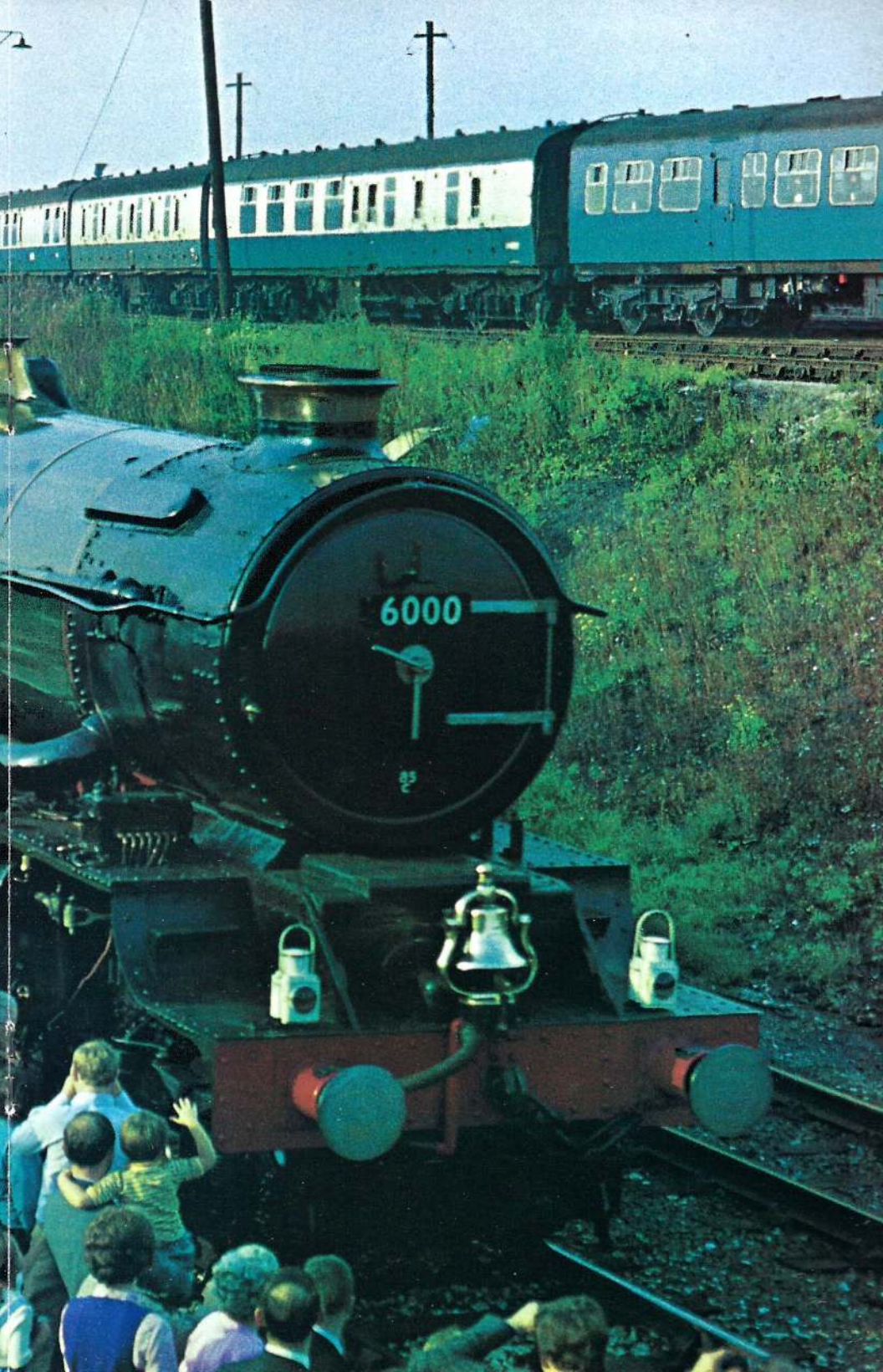
*Heating.* I do not understand the basis of




Last Years: King George V was one of the regular engines used on the Paddington-Birmingham-Wolverhampton Expresses. Her northern base was Stafford Road Shed where this picture was taken on Sept. 30th 1961.
[P. B. Whitehouse



Magnificent King : Tyseley Open Day 3rd October 1971 when some 17,000 people turned up to see steam in action. [John Adams.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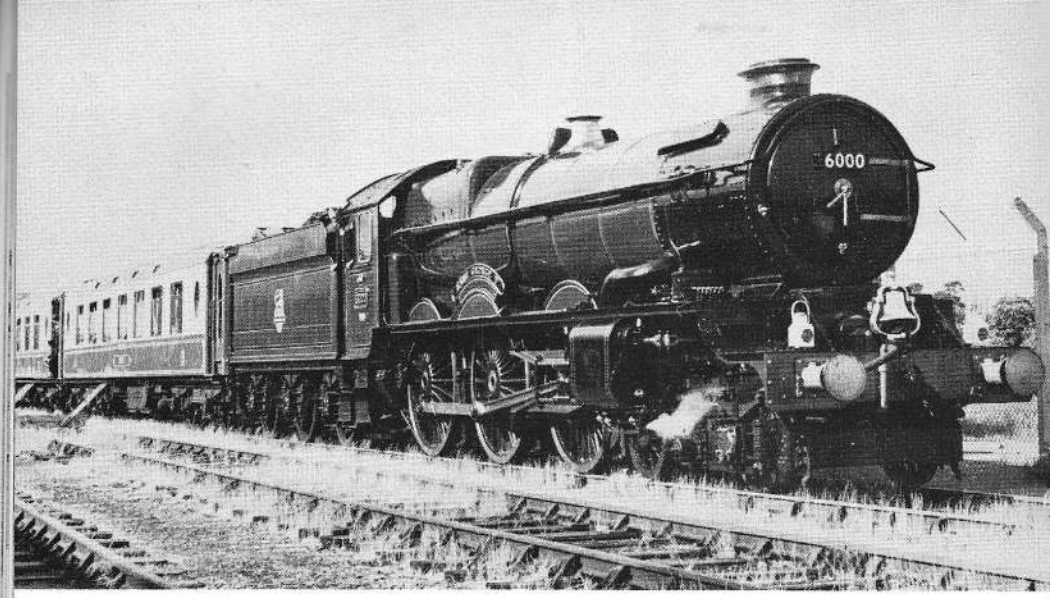



*Above:* Later Years: After standing forlorn at Stratford (London) and Swindon King George V was placed on loan to H. P. Bulmer Ltd who arranged for not only her housing but also return to working order. Here is the engine resplendent coupled to Bulmer's Pullmans at Hereford on 31st May 1971. [C. M. Whitehouse.

*Right:* An impressive picture of King George V at home at Bulmer's Hereford. [C. M. Whitehouse.

this objection. All the carriages offered to us for use still have steam heating arrangements. Where electric heating is installed, plainly there would be a difficulty but as most enthusiasts' excursions are arranged in the summer months I do not think that this would be very significant.

*Engine crews.* This may certainly be a problem in the future, but anybody who saw the performance of the crews – selected at random – on our recent tour would not assert that at present there is any shortage of qualified and willing drivers and firemen.

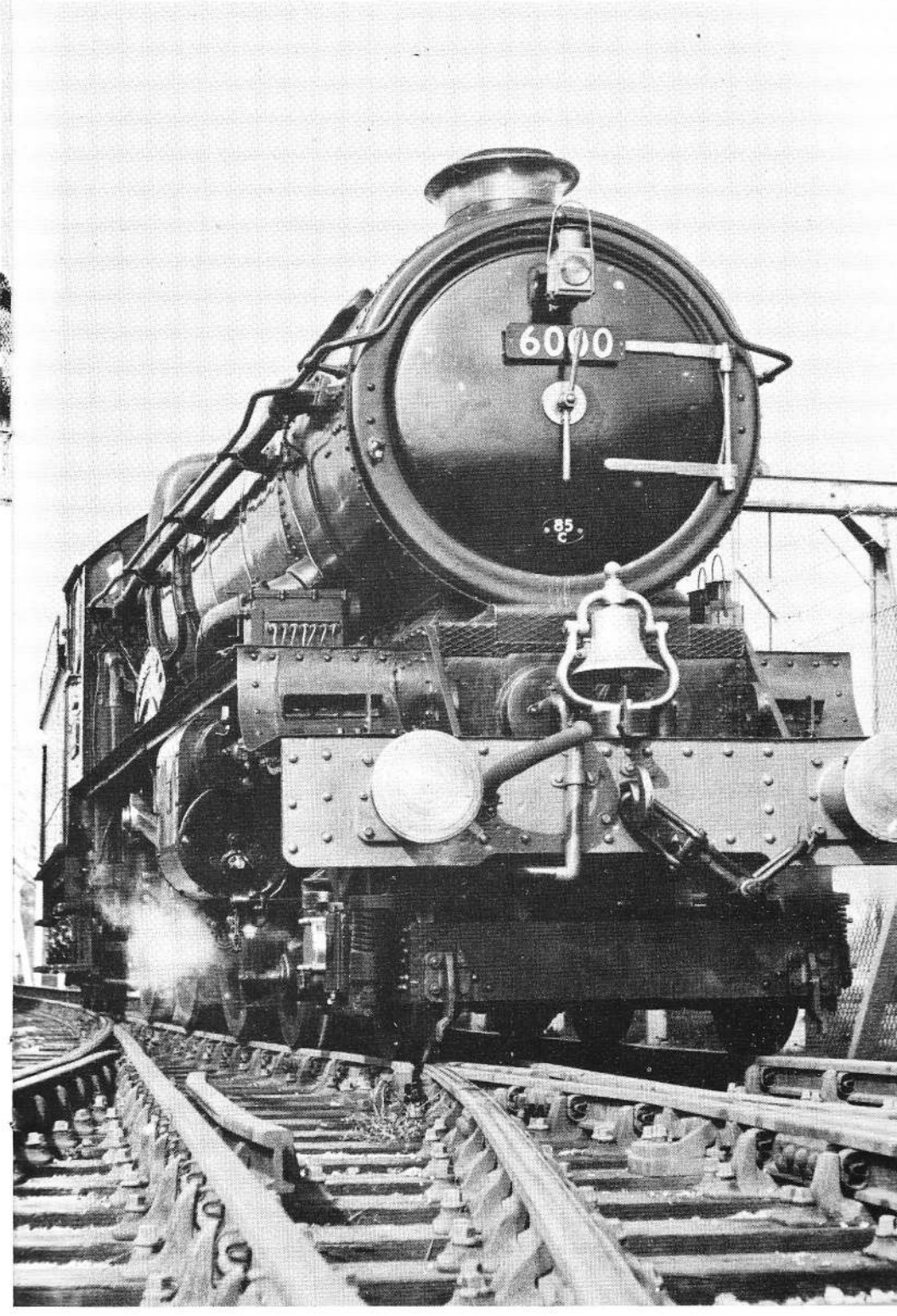
The remaining objections mentioned by Mr Reynolds, for example breakdowns or derailment, do not seem relevant since they apply to any trains, steam or diesel. I know of no statistics to indicate that steam engines produce more breakdowns or derailments than do diesel engines. In fact I believe the figures indicate the reverse.

The fact that in the USA the Southern Pacific Railroad permits no steam trains does not seem to me to prove anything other than the fact that British Railways were not alone on their limb.

Now may I deal with the really valid objection, the consumption of top management time, and here I must disclose a special interest: when I was a management consultant I specialised in the organisational problems of large companies and public bodies. British Railways is no exception to the general rule that the bigger the enterprise the less authority is delegated. Perhaps Dick Marsh and McKinseys will remedy this position, but at present Mr Reynolds' objection is understandable. I know now that the running of a single steam engine can involve a considerable diversion of the topmost management effort, simply because nobody lower in the structure has authority to make the requisite decisions.

However, having said this, let me summarise my views. I really know about railways and I really know about big companies. Top managers in British Railways are above average in comparison with most big companies. Dedicated, conscientious, competent, profit conscious, often reviled and badgered by cranks, they suffer from an awesome legacy of Victorian assets. What is important – even to steam enthusiasts – is that despite these obstacles the present management is succeeding. What is needed now is a new push for a better organisation structure, a greater delegation of authority, especially in the marketing function, better advice on advertising and something to give staff morale a shot in the arm: but at their present rate of progress within a few years British Railways could well be a model to industry.

A limited, but imaginative, steam policy could help – by winning friends and influencing people, which is the best way I find of selling things.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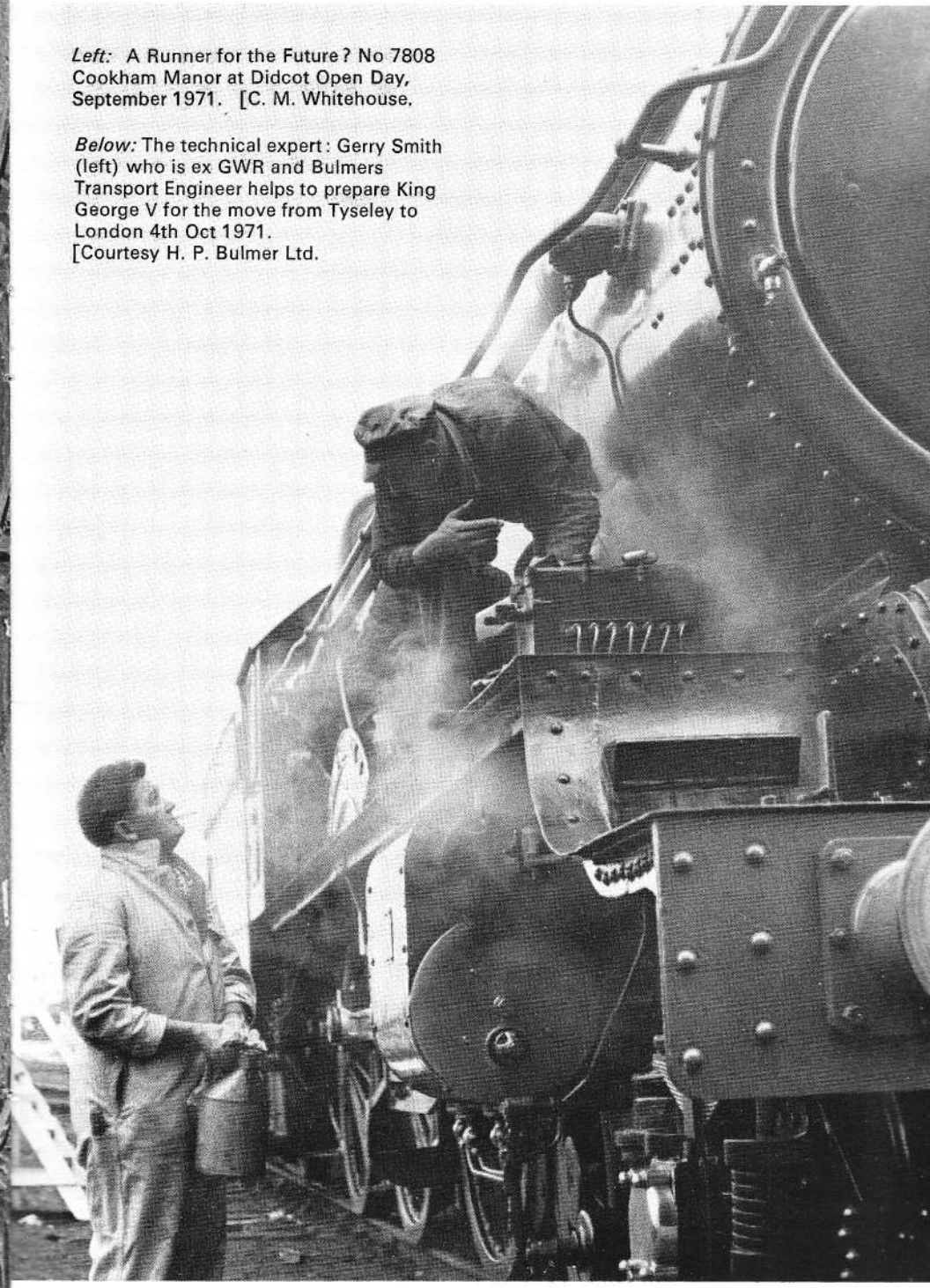
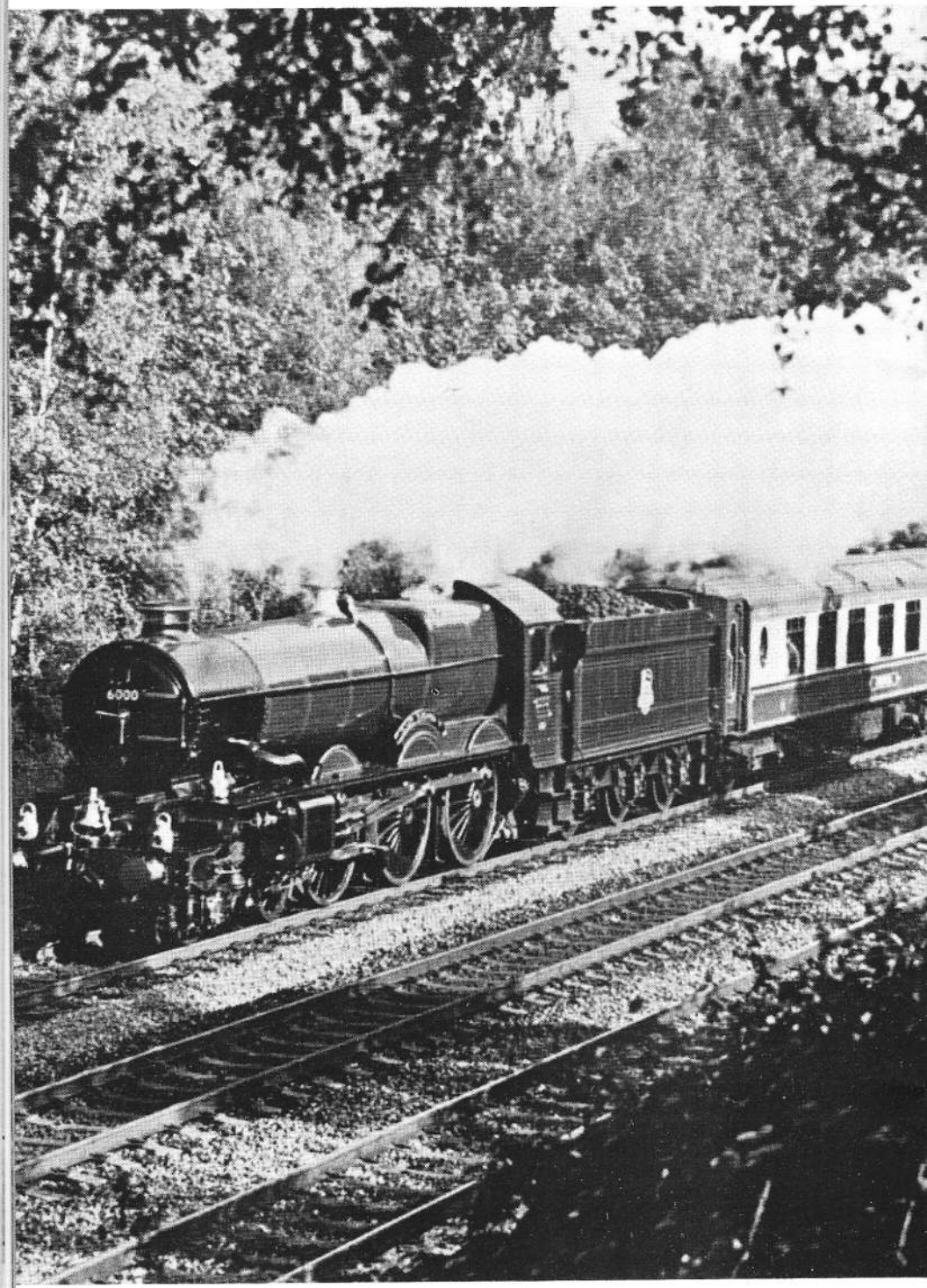


*Left:* A Runner for the Future? No 7808 Cookham Manor at Didcot Open Day, September 1971. [C. M. Whitehouse.

*Below:* The technical expert: Gerry Smith (left) who is ex GWR and Bulmers Transport Engineer helps to prepare King George V for the move from Tyseley to London 4th Oct 1971.
[Courtesy H. P. Bulmer Ltd.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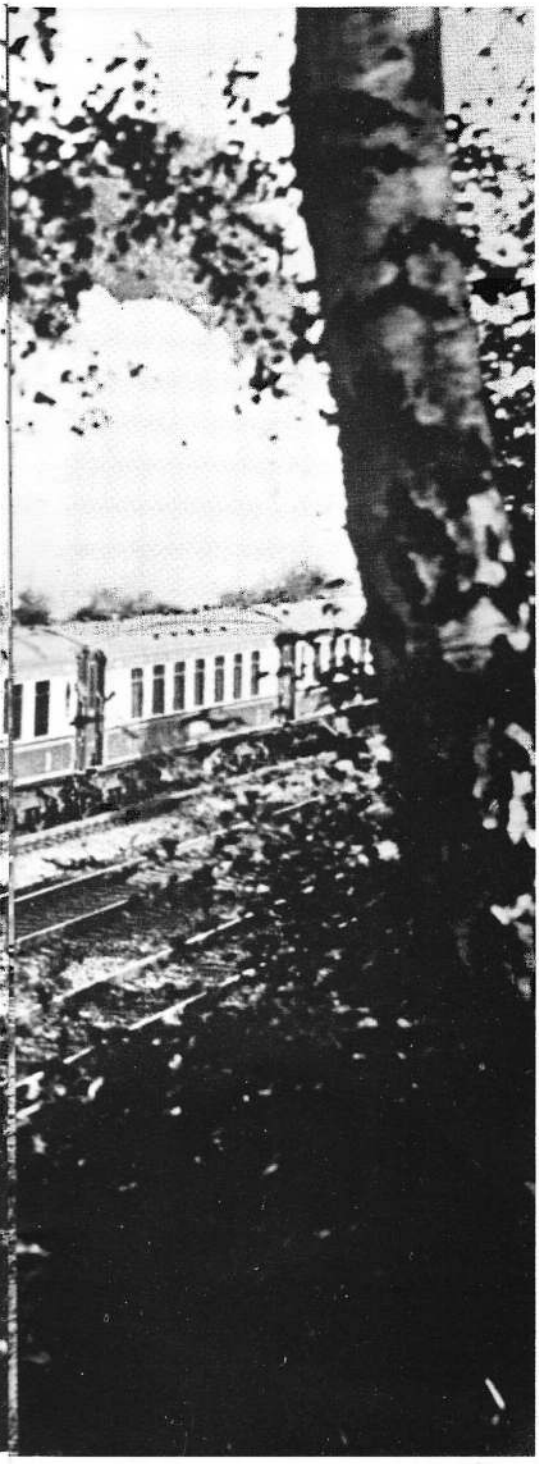


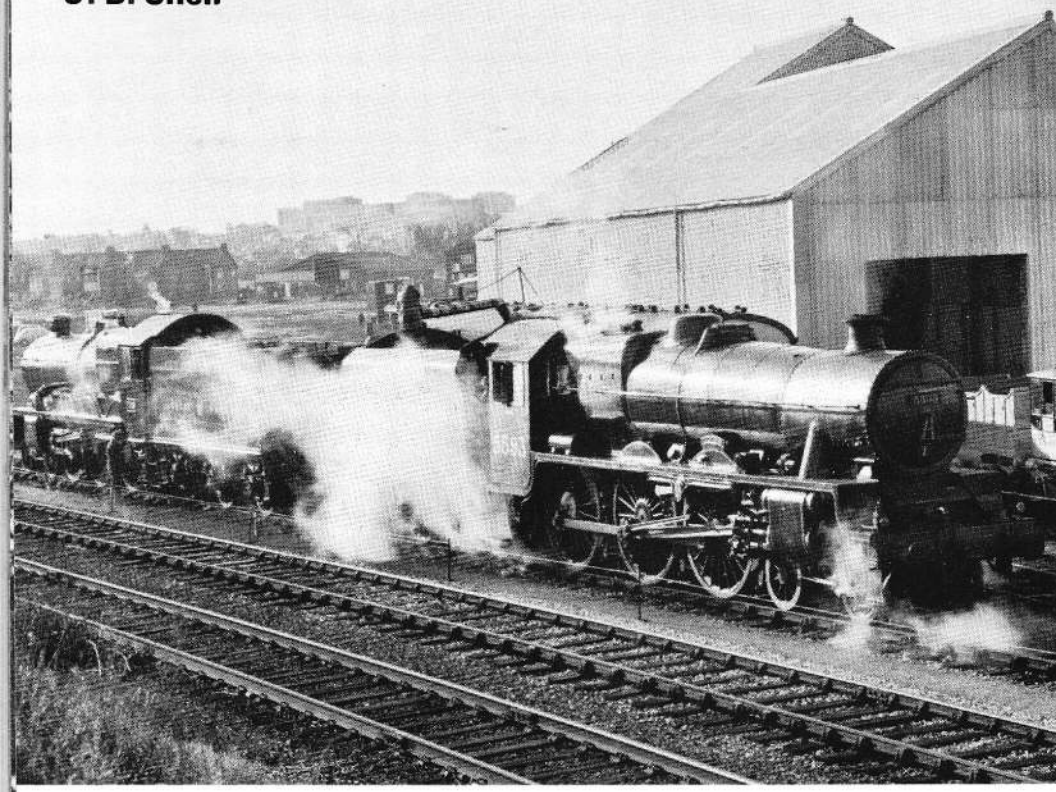
*Left:* En Route: King George V passes through Sonning cutting near Reading. [T. Stephens

*Above:* The commemorative bell. [C. M. Whitehouse.

*Below:* The man behind it all: Peter Prior (centre) Managing Director of H. P. Bulmer Ltd in discussion with BR officials at Oxford whilst en route to Tyseley 3rd Oct 1971. [Courtesy H. P. Bulmer Ltd

# What are they up to at Tyseley?

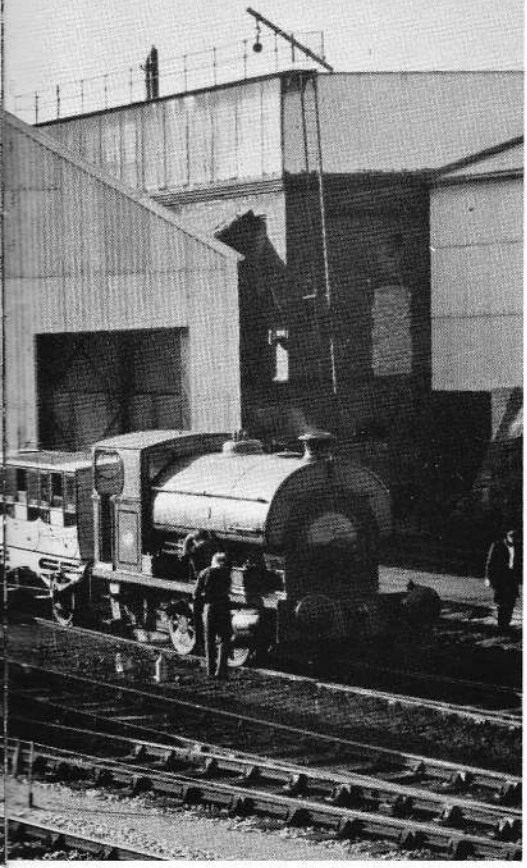
**J. B. Snell**



WHEN the last active BR "Castle" class 4–6–0 was purchased by 7029 Clun Castle Ltd in January 1966, one may be forgiven for wondering whether those responsible for taking it on quite realised what they were letting themselves in for. A lot of "preservation" organizations have gained ownership of steam locomotives during the last few years, some in working order and some not; some have been overhauled and improved in private hands, and some have deteriorated; but although the more respectable and successful engine owners have all realised that their locomotive(s) must be kept in a place where the services of a fair-sized workshop are available, and also desirably secure and protected from the weather, Tyseley stands alone in what it has set out to do by way of building up a complete new steam locomotive running and repair depot, more or less from scratch.

At first, *Clun Castle* was lodged in the surviving part of the old GWR roundhouse at Tyseley, what had originally been the main depot of that company in the Birmingham area. During 1966 BR were still using a certain amount of steam power in the district, and so all the facilities were still there and available for sharing. The engine did not do a great deal that year, but in the 1966–67 winter she was quartered in the brand-new BR diesel depot alongside, comprehensively repainted, and lightly overhauled. Painting to a satisfactory standard had been impossible in the old steam shed, which was partly demolished and in a state where bits fell off whenever the wind blew. During 1967 the engine ran several excursions on BR, including some to mark the end of through services on the GWR route from London to the Mersey and a programme of tours on the Eastern Region, but several mechanical troubles underlined the

The new shed at Tyseley with some of its occupants. [P. B. Whitehouse.



fact that to keep her fit for fast running quite a lot more was going to have to be done. Paint in itself did nothing to help. Meanwhile, BR steam working was coming to an end, Tyseley steam shed was about to be bulldozed flat and the site sold; there was no continuing welcome in the diesel depot, and *Clun* was out on a limb. Several ideas were examined, including a proposal to move the engine (together with her companion, the LMS "Jubilee" 4–6–0 *Kolhapur*, which was also acquired from BR during 1967) to the old steam shed at Stratford-on-Avon. Had this move taken place, the company would have developed on the same lines as several other locomotive preservation organizations, at Didcot, Dinting, and elsewhere, making the best of the facilities available in a small, abandoned, and more or less run-down old depot, and with at least one eye cocked on the revenue earnable from visiting tourists and a "museum-type" operation. The advantage of this sort of plan was that it was less ambitious and therefore less costly, so very much easier to get working. And given a fair wind from the Kremlin, and a sound organization, it would be feasible to carry out enough work on the engines to fit them for some limited main-line running in such surroundings.

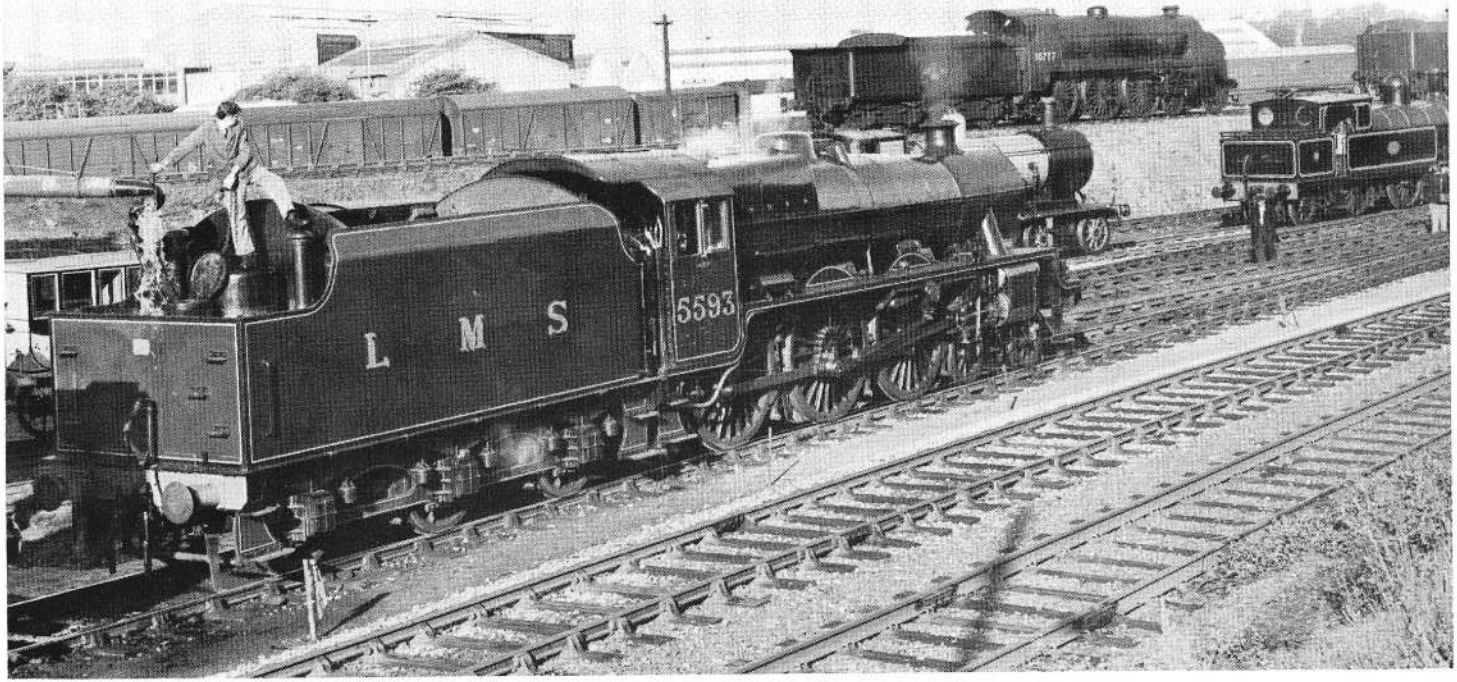
But those responsible for *Clun* and *Kolhapur* were not satisfied with this limited scheme. Against it was the fact that for any serious amount of main-line excursion running, of the order of some thousands of miles per engine per annum, the necessarily leisurely pace of overhaul in a small depot, where anything in the way of repairs to (for instance) fireboxes or axleboxes would take a matter of years, was insupportable. To accept the task of powering steam-hauled specials meant accepting the discipline and urgency of a schedule and timetable. Bookings would have to be honoured; there would have to be a reserve of works capacity to push things through in a hurry. Furthermore, it was going to become harder to get some of the jobs done by outside firms on contract, even though much of the work involved in overhauling steam locomotives is basic and conventional heavy engineering within the range of many large firms (for instance, marine engineers). There was thus a strong argument in favour of large-scale self-sufficiency, although it meant taking a gamble on the long-term co-operation of British Railways in allowing steam specials to operate. It had to be BR, since no private or "preserved" line would ever be able to provide the long stretch of track maintained to "intercity" standards that was the other half of the requirement.

So the decision was taken to play for the high stakes, and lease part of the Tyseley site that included the old coaling stage and water tower (the last steam-era buildings to survive), and use these as the foundation for a small but self-sufficient steam motive power depot and repair shops. Choosing Tyseley, in an urban area of fairly high land values, brought more problems, partly financial and partly those of the increased risk of trespass and vandalism; however, BR were prepared to be helpful over the terms of the lease, and siting the enterprise in the middle of the second largest city in England did mean that there would be a lot of support on the doorstep. The site itself was a mess; the coaling stage of any engine shed was never likely to be the most salubrious part of it, and in the basement were some cavernous and neglected nineteenth-century lavatories, better imagined than described. With the run-down of the depot, the drains were in a poor state all over and the whole site heaped with piles of ash and junk of every kind, while the permanent way was loose and battered.

To start with, the coal loading area itself,

What the Public See. 1. 5593 Kolhapur, 777 Sir Lamiel, and No. 1008 await an Open Day. [P. B. Whitehouse.

What the Public See. 2. 7029 Clun Castle heads a train out of the depot whilst the youngsters enjoy the cab of No 120. [C. M. Whitehouse.



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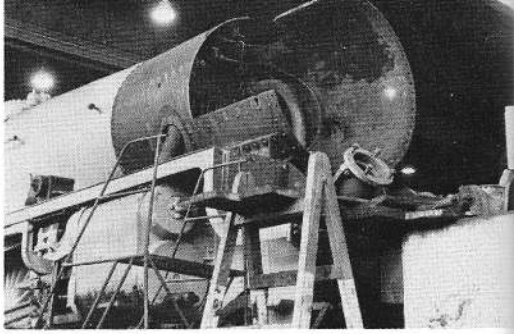
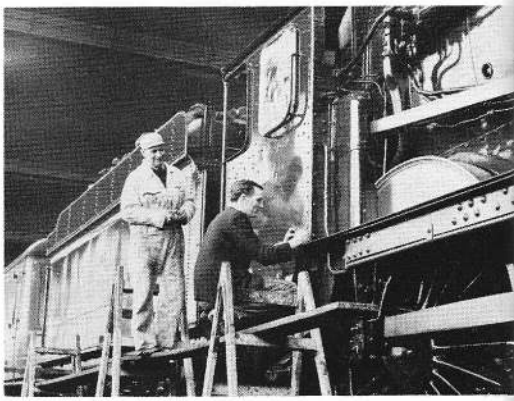
derous job to do this with a main-line 4–6–0.

It was therefore necessary to contemplate building a new and much larger shed round these large and essential tools. The tools themselves had to be obtained second-hand. An ordinary large lathe will not do since although it might be capable of truing 6ft 8in diameter tyres and axle journals, it could not deal with such items as crankpins which are set off-centre; it had to be a special railway wheel lathe. Most BR ones which survived were ancient and decrepit; but a fairly modern one in good order was available nearby at Bescot. It was obtained and moved and installed at Tyseley (but it had to be lifted by a 40-ton rail-mounted crane which could not approach its original position at Bescot, so it had to be dismantled, cut out of its foundations, jacked and winched into position for the lift and then it all had to be done in reverse for its re-installation). Similarly with the wheel drop. Most, again, were ancient and also hydraulically worked (which was impractical now since it would need the installation of hydraulic power supply also). But an electrically powered wheeldrop was available at Ipswich. This was again obtained, transported, and installed (but wheeldrops live in pits of reinforced concrete some 15 feet deep, which tend to fill with age-old oil and slime, and are complex machines to dismantle and re-erect). Digging and concreting the wheeldrop pit was the first work started for the new depot; once the foundations were in, the shell of the new building went up in 1970 – it is some 220ft long and 60ft wide. No suitable crane for use inside the shed has been located, and although it would be possible to make do with hired cranes on special occasions, ultimately a crane will have to be built (and to give it room the roof of the new building will have to be raised).

Quite apart from all these large items, many smaller machines have been acquired and have been or will be installed. These include two electric capstans, to move dead engines about in the works, various smaller lathes, planing, milling, drilling, and boring machines, a hydraulic press to enable bushes and crankpins (etc) to be pressed in or removed, a white-metalling shop and a well-equipped small toolroom set up in the original workshop. Meanwhile, the equipment belonging to the enterprise has been added to. The two original 4–6–0s are still serviceable (though as is pointed out, without a wheeldrop a bad hot box would be a serious embarrassment). To them has been added a "Hall" 4–6–0 exhumed from Barry and now being brought back from the dead, and two 57XX 0–6–0 pannier tanks acquired from London Transport in 1971, plus three Pullman coaches used for special catering functions, and some good rolling stock. Certain other locomotives the property of other organizations or individuals are also now boarded at Tyseley, including LMS Class 5 4–6–0



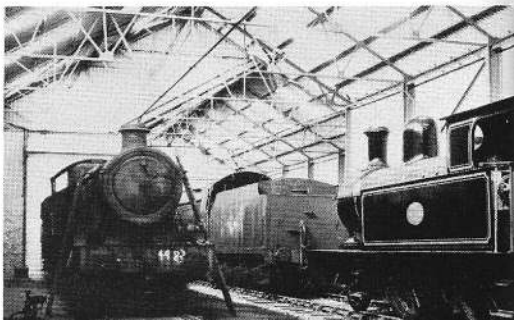


*Top:* Repair and Renewals. 1. A new smokebox for Kolhapur. [P. B. Whitehouse.

*Above:* Repair and Renewals. 2. Lining out 7029 Clun Castle. [C. M. Whitehouse.

*Below:* Inside the New Shed: 4983 Albert Hall just arrived (November 1970) from Barry, plus Schools class Cheltenham, and the L & Y tank No 1008. In foreground the Wheel Drop. [P. B. Whitehouse.

*Right:* John Scholes Curator to the British Transport Museum at Clapham talks to James Kent the Chief Engineer to the Standard Gauge Steam Trust whilst on a tour of the trust's newly installed workshops and tool room. [John Adams.

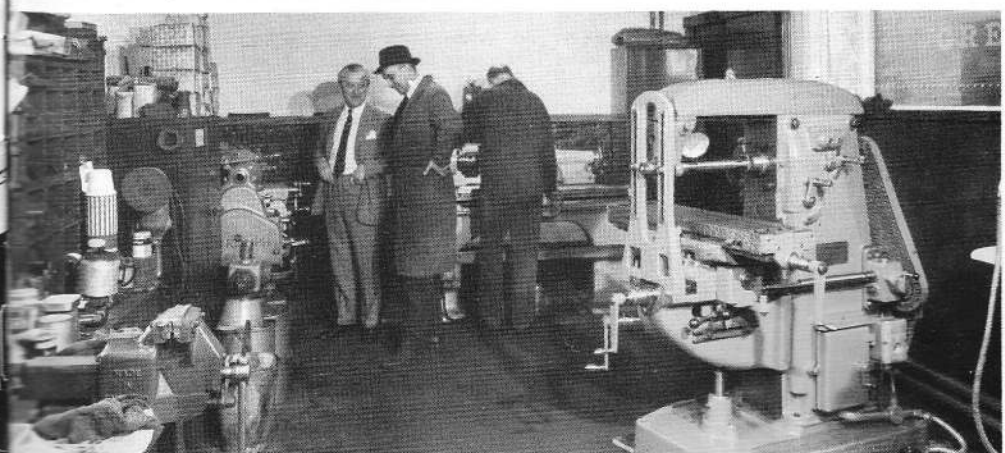


No 5428 and GNR J52 0–6–0T No 1247, as well as a number on loan from the Department of Education and Science originally belonging to BR's own collection.

All this has cost a lot of money. The premises and equipment at Tyseley are the property of a registered charity, the Standard Gauge Steam Trust, which has raised a considerable amount of money by appeals to and donations from its members and from industry as a whole. It has also borrowed a great deal. The shell of the new building so far has cost £23,000, and the other work described above together with provision of a toilet block has cost another £7,000 or so. But the completion of the programme, extension of the depot building, acquisition and re-erection of the old Tyseley roundhouse turntable (which now stands on land to be sold) will cost over £50,000 more, and some desirable additions such as a small-exhibit museum and conversion of the original loco "shed" under the water tank into a carriage works will send the total bill even higher.

So the thing has snowballed very considerably. The Standard Gauge Steam Trust has not yet been able to raise all the money needed to complete the enterprise; it has in fact one way and another raised approximately £35,000 and borrowed another £12,000 on overdraft. Quite apart from the problem of getting the rest of the money in, these loans must be repaid. As yet the workshops are not wholly operational, so although it is the intention to carry out work for owners of steam locomotives all over the country (as well as their own) this cannot bring cash in yet (and in any case this is not a very promising market, considering the number of engines in the hands of owners not able to finance the programme of repair work necessary for sustained main-line running). Again, it is difficult to imagine that volunteer labour even in Birmingham, with its large reservoir of supporters with the necessary skills, is going to be able to make best use of all the facilities provided once work is having to be done to a timetable, and it will certainly be necessary ultimately to take on permanent staff. And the rent bill will be a substantial item in itself. The income from Open Days, massive and well-advertised burn-ups attracting up to 18,000 visitors, held on the site perhaps twice a year with all manner of additional special attractions and several engines in steam, goes some way to meet outgoings but nowhere to raising capital sums.

Quite obviously, therefore, Tyseley's ultimate justification depends on its becoming a centre – indeed, perhaps *the* centre – for the overhaul and maintenance of a small fleet of steam locomotives licensed by British Railways for main-line running on a reasonably regular basis. Without the work that will be involved in this, then the undertaking will be just another steam centre. But if such a programme of steam running is established, something like Tyseley will be quite essential. None of the other steam locomotive "preservation centres", with the exceptions to some extent of Carnforth and Didcot, are adequately equipped for the job, and these places suffer from the fact that their works and machines are old and run-down (on the other hand, they do not have the burden of starting from scratch). One may therefore imagine the unhappiness of Tyseley's organisers should BR's notorious "steam ban" be extended ad infinitum. But this has, it seems, now started to be relaxed, and was in any case something very largely irrational. BR never gave any very convincing justification for it, and certain apologists who ventured arguments in support of it were fairly easy to savage. There were and are, of course, plenty of difficulties; the maintenance question is one; fuel, water, and ash disposal is another; fire risk now that railway banks are not kept well trimmed is a third. But none of these are even remotely insoluble, given goodwill. It was goodwill that was fundamentally lacking; and this being so, rational argument never had any chance of making any headway. It needed a change of personalities. We are now perhaps seeing the beginnings of a new realism on the question from BR; let us hope that it grows and that the many very real problems are treated as problems, and not erected again into obstructions.



The Three Tyseley Pullmans: This picture by the Birmingham Post was taken at Tyseley station prior to a run to Gloucester in May 1971.

**PRIORITIES TO PLAN** (*Right:*)

Priority will be given to Members Toilets c, followed by the Heavy Machine Shop e, it is intended that this shop be wired and lit before the winter to allow essential work to proceed. The wheel drop is to be re-built. A Tangye gas engine is to be installed. Areas of blue brick paving will also be incorporated into these works as time permits.

**MUSEUM AREA**

The museum area for the display of the smaller items associated with the railway age is urgently required, not only in order to create an added interest for our visitors, but to enable us to accept many rare and valuable items which we have been offered but cannot take at the present moment.

I now come to the site generally. There is still much to do in the relaying and ballasting of track, gravelling the walkways, preparation of car park, fencing of the site and generally planting with shrubs, flowers. etc. This again is most important if we are to make our site both safe and pleasant.

We need all the help we can get from our members in carrying our this part of the programme.

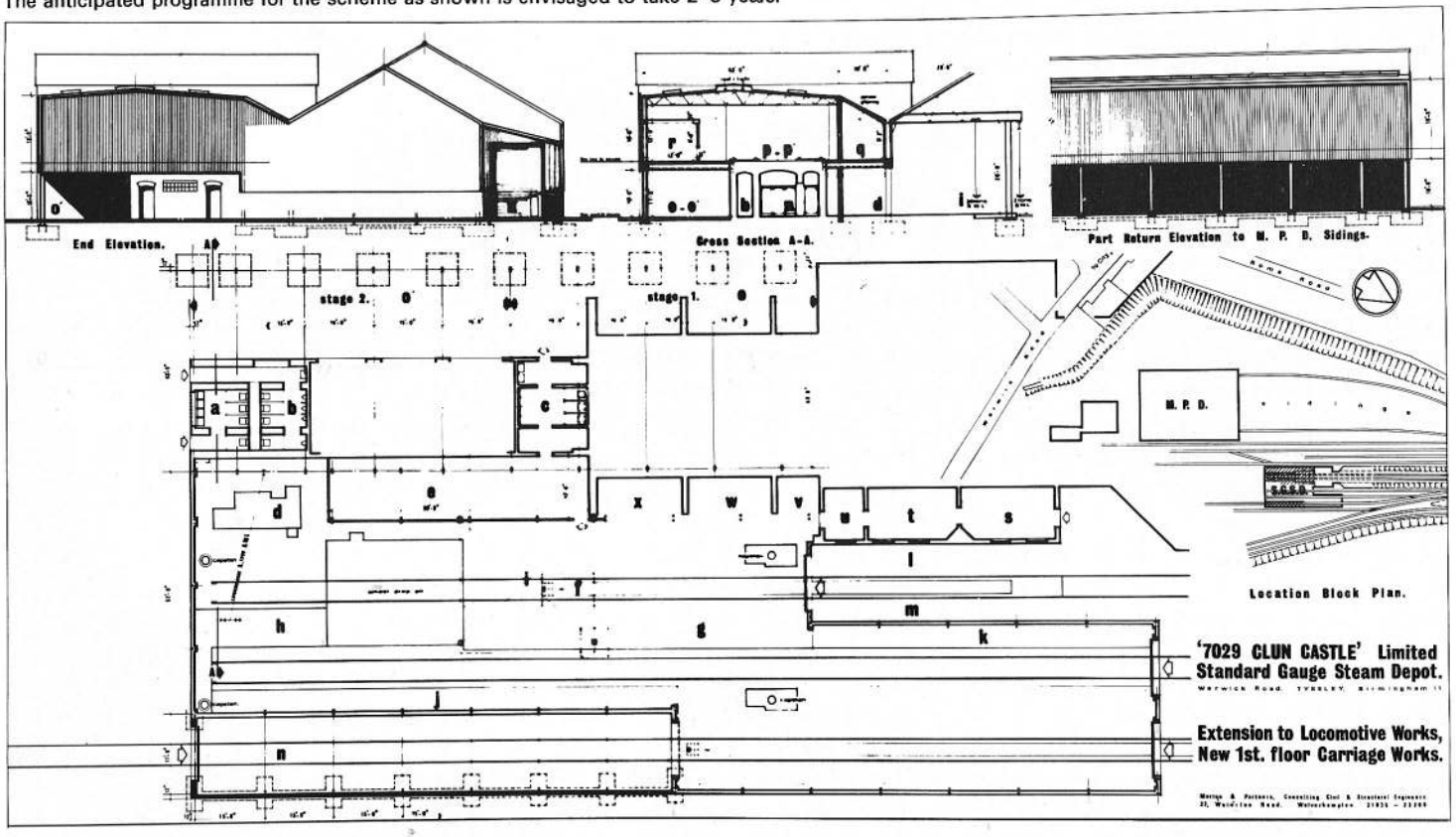
**KEY TO PLAN**

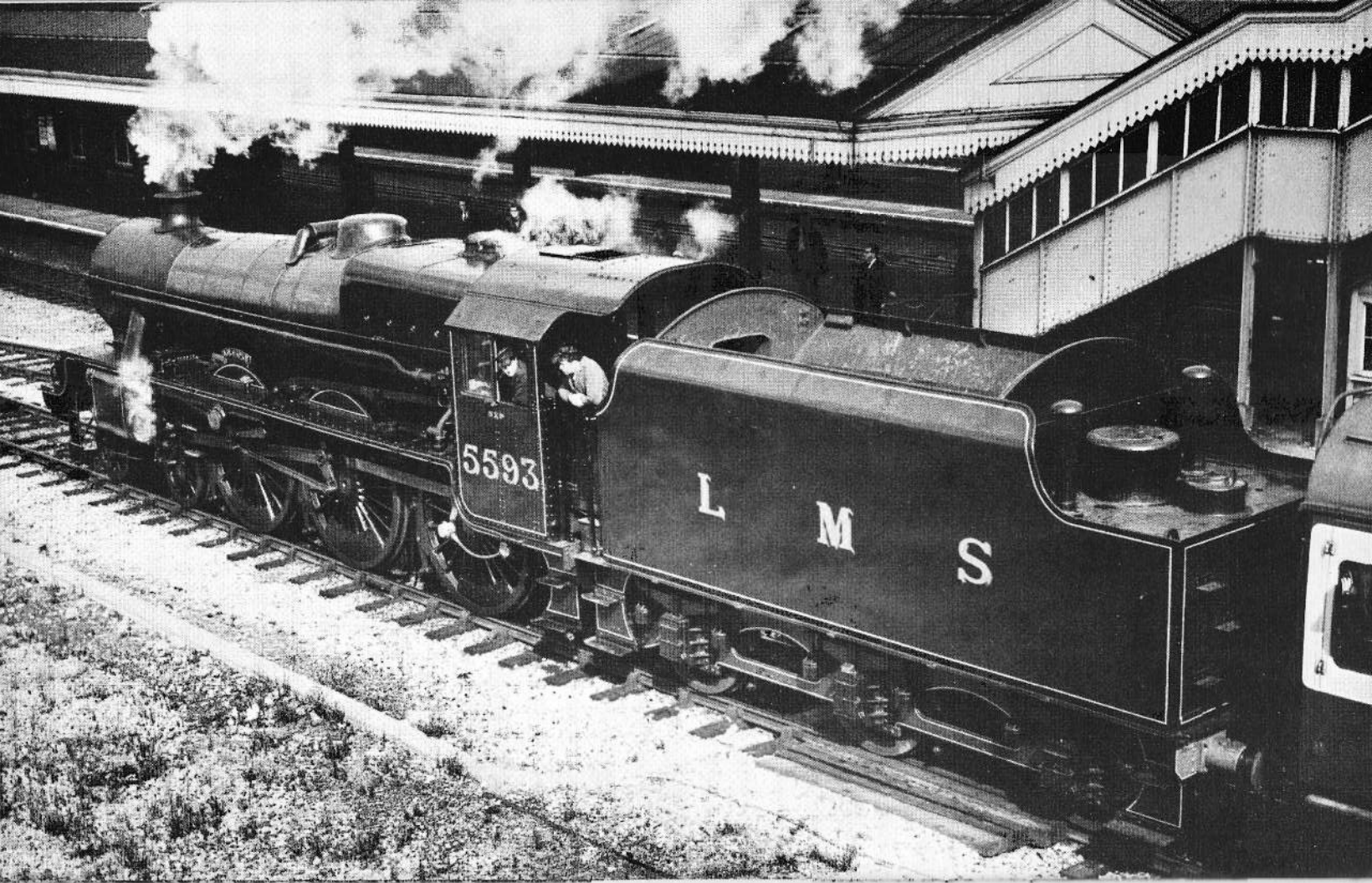
Accommodation: a, Ladies Toilet; b, Gents Toilet; c, Members Toilet (to be renovated); d, Wheel lathe (under re-building); e, Heavy Machine Shop (future); f, Extension to Engine Pit; g-h, Machine base – rein. conc.; i, 40 tons Lifting Bay (future construction – foundation bases constructed with g.); j, Area of blue brick paving; k, blue brick paving; l-m, future external paving; o-o', Museum; p-p', 1st floor Carriage Works (in 2 stages); q, Display Area; r, Offices (Chairman's Suite, Board Room, C.M.E.'s and Works Engineer, Drawing Offices); s, Carpenter's Shop (future); t, Stores; u, White Smiths; v, Stairway from top shop; w, Welding Plate Shop; x, Boiler Smiths.

## BUILDING and CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS at TYSELEY

This plan shows the new extensions and future works proposed at the Depot.

The anticipated programme for the scheme as shown is envisaged to take 2–3 years.

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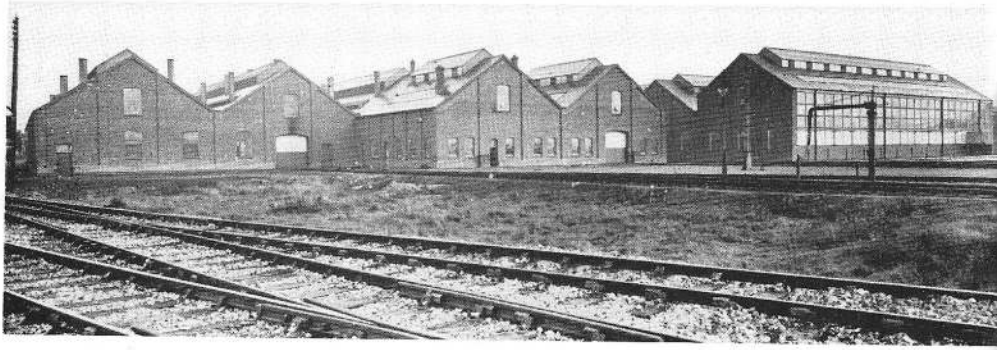
*Above:* 5593 Kolhapur passes Tyseley Station with an open day passenger train. [J. W. Ellson.

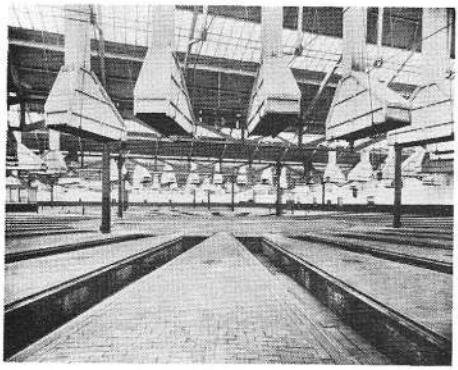
*Below:* 7029 Clun Castle at Tyseley Station. [J. W. Ellson.

# SHED AND SHOPS 1908

During the final decade of steam, standards gradually lowered until, in the last years, the steam shed was a dirty, unkempt, and unwanted place. But this was not always so, and these pictures of Tyseley shed and works in the Edwardian era show plainly that the steam engine could, and did, live in conditions of cleanliness and tidyness.

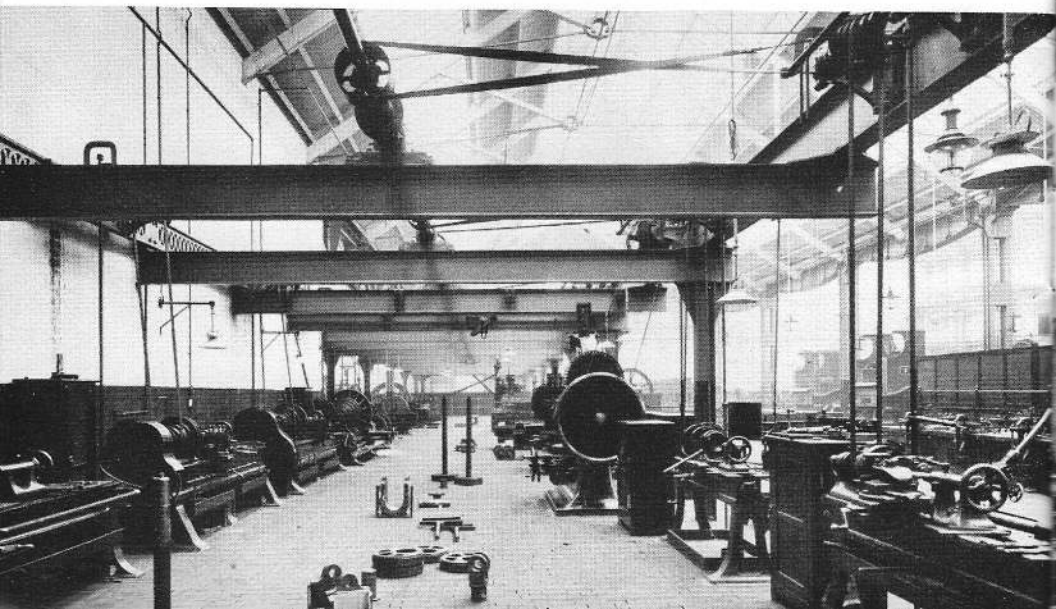


Exterior view of Tyseley Shed and Works (on right) taken from the existing carriage loop in September 1908. Note the well lit workshop building.

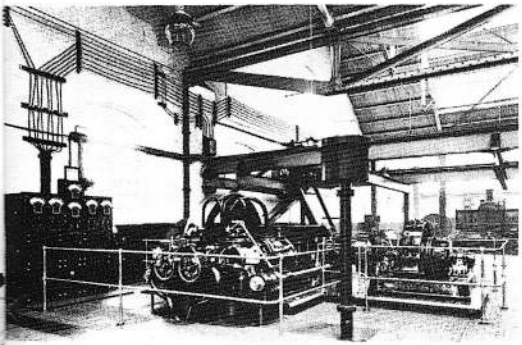


Inside the twin roundsheds. Note the blue brick pavings for hard wear and cleanliness and the boarded in turntable pits for safety.

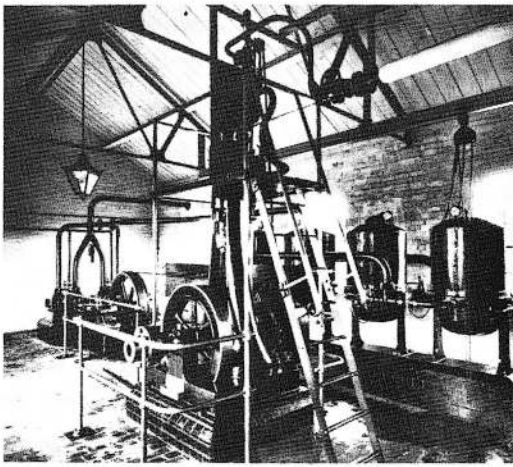
Inside the machine shop. Machinery is driven from overhead shafting by belts.



Engines in the works. The repair shop at Tyseley showing the facilities (including lifting) available. The locomotives include Nos 1184, 7, 3279, 3168, and 3911.

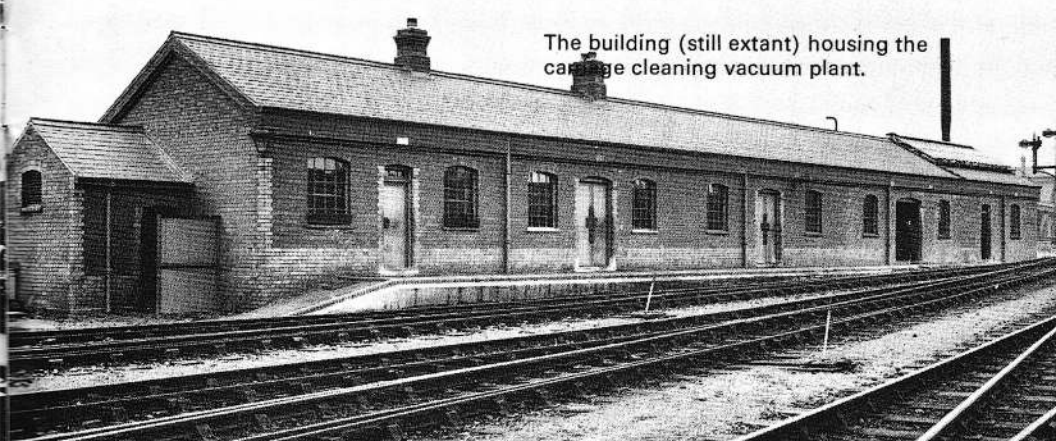


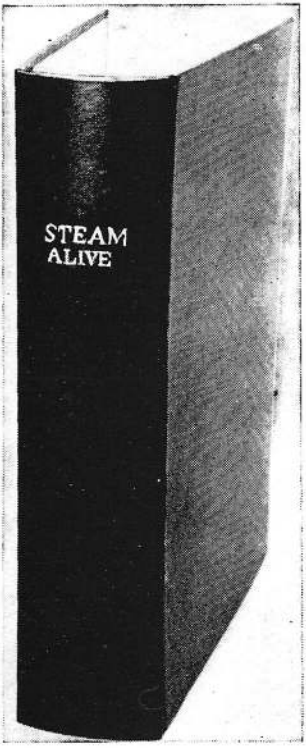
The Gas Engine used to drive the generator



Carriage cleaning vacuum plant.

The building (still extant) housing the carriage cleaning vacuum plant.



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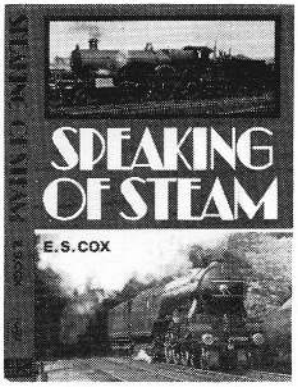


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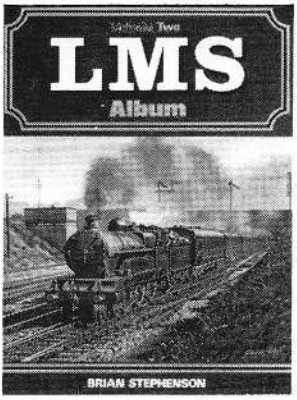


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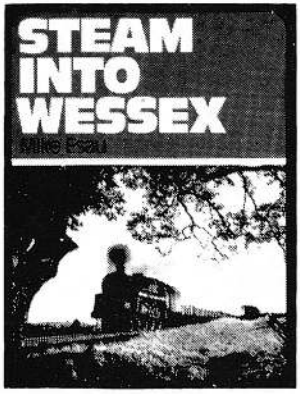


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